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WAR TIGER

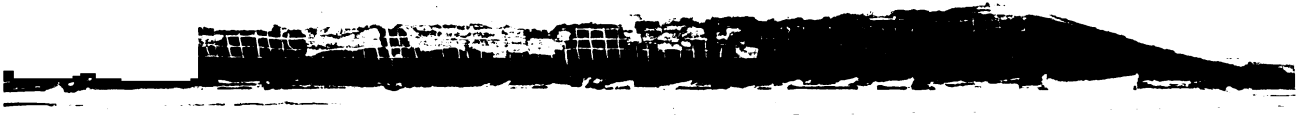
William Dalton

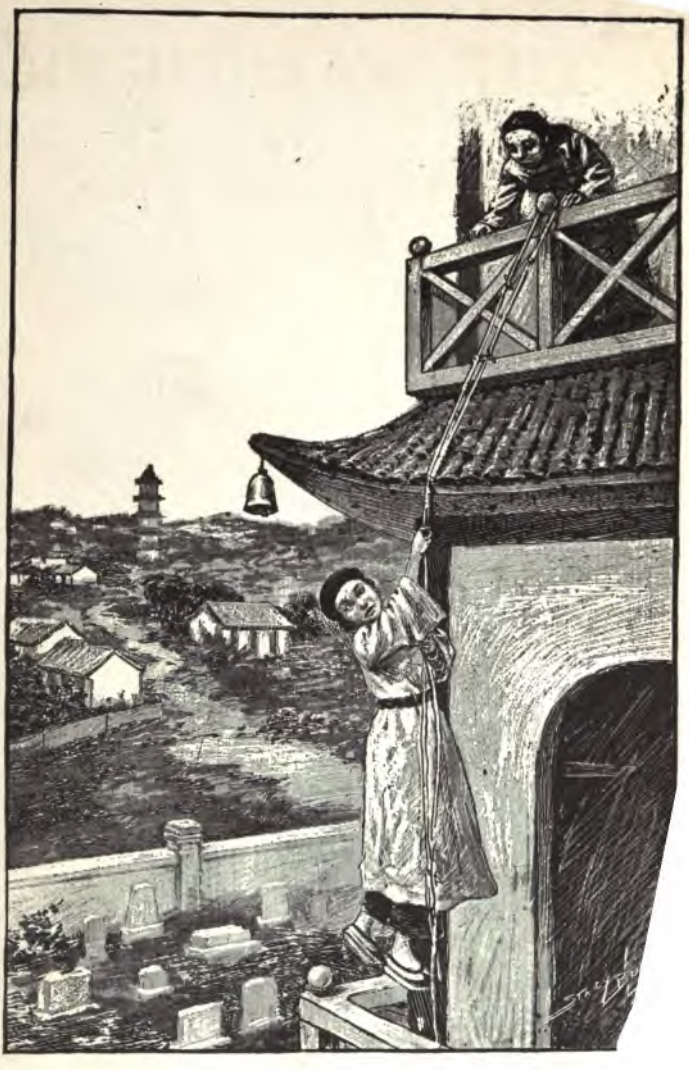
Love to José
from Dorothy

1908

NC

1. Fiction, English





"He swung onto the rope, keeping both ends in his hands, and low himself onto the projecting canopy or fringe of the second story."

(See page

THE WAR TIGER

OR

A Tale of the Conquest of China

BY

WILLIAM DALTON

AUTHOR OF

"THE WOLF BOY OF CHINA," "THE WHITE ELEPHANT,"
"THE TIGER PRINCE," ETC.

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PREFACE.

As free use is made in the following story of the names of personages who played important parts in and during the last Tartar Conquest of China, the Author believes that a slight sketch of that turbulent epoch may not be uninteresting to his readers.

Twenty-two dynasties have given some two hundred and forty Emperors to the Celestial Kingdom; of these, two were Tartars, who obtained the throne by conquest and bloodshed. In the course of time, however, the first Tartar family, with the whole of their race, were either massacred or driven from the land by a Chinese leader, who, by mounting the throne, founded the celebrated family of the Mings.

The last of the Ming Emperors, Wey-t-song, had not been many years upon the throne, when, from a wise and energetic man, he became so indolent, and regardless of all but his pleasures, that the people became oppressed by the magistrates; indeed, to use a Chinese phrase, to such an extent did the "big fish eat all the little ones," that a famine grew in the land,

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which caused the starving people to arise in rebellion throughout the empire

Taking advantage of this disorder, several ambitious lords collected together bands of vagabonds, set themselves up as petty kings, and plundered and oppressed the innocent people, till the land grew damp with their tears.

At the same time, the chief, or king, of the Mantchou Tartars, learning that China was like a house divided against itself, rode with a large army upon the frontier of Pe-tche-Lee, the capital province.

The appearance, however, of this great enemy aroused what little nationality remained, and three great lords came to the Emperor's assistance. The first was Woo-san-Kwei, who, at the head of an army, kept the Tartars at bay; the other two, Li-Kong and Chang, were sent into different provinces, where, although bad men, being good generals, they succeeded in crushing all other rogues but themselves. The last-named generals, however, on their return, becoming enraged at the Emperor's ingratitude, took up arms against him, and, finding no great difficulty in subduing a people who preferred any other Chinese to their Emperor, seized upon two of the richest provinces, and established themselves as independent royalets, or petty kings.

Now, as in the great revolutions of England, America, and France, so in China, anarchy brought forth its great men; but foremost among them all stood Chin-Chi-Loong—a kind of Paul Jones, a pirate in the eyes of his enemies, a patriot in those of his friends.

Found starving when a boy, by the Portuguese priests at Macao, they took him under their care, taught him Christianity, and baptized him by the name of Nicholas Gaspard. While quite a youth, he took service on board a trading ship, in which humble position, the strength of his intellect and will so soon exhibited itself, that at an early age he became second in command, and his captain dying soon after, left him sole owner and commander of the vessel and its rich cargo.

Then it was that his true character began to develop itself; he sought to accumulate great wealth; for this purpose he traded with Japan, Siam, and the Europeans, so assiduously, that at the outbreak of the rebellion, he had become the richest merchant in an empire of rich merchants; but what to him was of far greater importance, a powerful sea-chief—for he then commanded and owned the greatest fleet that ever sailed in the Chinese seas, and as he had taken care to arm every ship, he became the terror of the three great contending parties; namely, the Em-

peror, the rebels, and the Tartars, who, all in turn, at times, offered great rewards for his head, and at others, for his services.

Remarkable, however, as were the fortunes of this sea-chief, they were less so than those of his distinguished son, the hero of this story.

The Author will only add, that, although many of the adventures here set down may not be found in the pages of Chinese history, if, entwining information with amusement, they bring vividly before the mind's eye of his young reader, the manners, laws, legends, superstitions, history, or character of that great, though quaint people in whom more than a thousand years have failed to make any material change, his satisfaction will be the greater that he has again deserved well of those to whom his gratitude is due for the kind, thorough, and hearty reception they gave to the Adventures of "THE WOLF-BOY OF CHINA."

WILLIAM DALTON.

THE WAR TIGER.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG SEA CHIEF.—HIS MISSION.

NEARLY midway between Formosa and the most southern point of the Chinese province of Fokien are the Pescadores, a cluster of small islands, which are so barren that their few inhabitants are put to the trouble of procuring food, and even fuel, from the main land.

These islands, however, have a value of their own in the shape of a capacious harbor and safe anchorage, that was readily seen by the Dutch, the first civilized people who established themselves upon the neighboring island of Formosa, which, although a beautiful and fertile land, has not a sufficient depth of water for vessels of great draught.

It was in this harbor that a large fleet of trading vessels, laden with pearls, red copper, sabre-blades, fan-paper, porcelain, and many other articles of commerce purchased at Japan, and on its way to the large trading cities further south, sought shelter from one of the violent tempests so common to the China seas.

One of these vessels was anchored in the direction

of Formosa, some distance in advance. Larger than the others, she was also of European build, and mounted with ten guns. A horde of wild half-naked men swarmed about the rigging, and decks, interspersed here and there with an officer garbed in the wide-sleeved robe common to the Chinese prior to the Mantchou Tartar conquest.

The afterpart of the deck was taken up with a tent formed of poles and matting of bamboo, the interior of which was luxuriously fitted with chairs, tables, and sofas, tastefully wrought from the wood of roses or, as it is termed in this country, rose-wood. The walls, highly painted and glittering with japan, were hung with Chinese pictures in gilded and japanned frames. Between these were long strips of satin up on which, imprinted in colors and gold, were some of the choicest moral maxims from the books of the philosopher Confucius.

The panes of the windows, four in number, were formed of stained transparent paper. In the piers between, supported by glittering branches, were painted lanterns, and from the ceiling, which shone with colors and carvings of celestial blue and burnished gold, was suspended a gong of pure silver. So far there could be no doubt that it was the floating habitation of a wealthy Chinese, but then, curiously, there was a total absence of those idols, altars, and burning incense, which to this day are to be found in all Chinese vessels. The truth was, that although a Chinese, the owner was a Christian, as was evinced by a niche at one end of the room, in which stood a

handsome *Priè Dieu*, surmounted by a fine painting of Christ upon the cross.

At this altar, with his hands clasped, knelt a boy of seventeen, whose high cheek bones, dark eyes, and long black hair, declared his Chinese origin. His head and neck were bare, and his ample robe of green silk, which reached nearly to his close fitting leather boots, was confined in the middle by a crimson girdle, fastened by a clasp of agate stone. From the girdle hung a short straight sword. Although a Chinese, the youth was a Christian; one, indeed, of those whose faith had been gathered from the teachings of the early European missionaries, whose indefatigable exertions and untiring patience amidst much persecution, contumely, and even martyrdom, will forever keep their names green in the memories of the Chinese.

As the youth arose from his kneeling position, the report of a gun rang through the air, so snatching up his cap of sable, he went on deck to welcome the arrival of his father, who ascended the side of the vessel followed by some half-dozen officers, attired like himself in loose robes of thick brown silk, oiled to withstand the weather and without one warlike vestment, except the short swords which hung from their girdles.

Standing with his head bent foward and his arms straight by his sides, the attitude of respect, the youth waited for his father to salute him, after which he followed him through the rank of officers to the cabin, when observing the gloomy aspect of the chief's

countenance, he said "Has my honored father, the great chief, not prospered with the barbarian Hollanders?"

"To the full, my son, for like the greedy wolves they have purchased the whole of my merchandise, and I have more than sufficient wealth to destroy the vermin enemies who are turning the children of the Son of Heaven from those habits of peace which have so long rendered them the greatest and most prosperous of the world's people."

"Of what enemies does my honorable father speak? Surely there are none but the savage Tartars."

"Of three, my son,—the Tartars, who are now within a few leagues of the palace of Ten Thousand Years himself; the European savages, who under pretence of commerce have obtained a footing, that, if not soon rooted out, will last forever; and worse, by far worse,—for internal rebellion is as destructive to an empire as to an household,—the rebel mandarins who are now at open war with their holy sovereign."

"Is this treble sore fresh, that it should now so rankle the heart and cloud the brow of my venerable parent?"

"Truly so, my son, for although long festering it has but now reached a head," replied the chief, adding, "To the days of my great-grandsire the empire had been free from the profane feet of barbarians.

Then the different governments passed into the hands of cowardly mandarins, whose weakness became the advantage of the pirate Li-Lao, who ravaged the whole coast with fire and sword, and to get

rid of whom the puny officials sought the aid of the Portugals, who traded at one of the outer ports These barbarians, however, were brave; they sought, fought, and killed the pirate, and destroyed his ships and, as a reward, were permitted to settle at Macao."

"Surely, my father should be grateful to these Portugals, whose priests first shed upon his eyes and heart the light of Christianity," said the boy bowing reverently.

"They taught me for their own ends, and I would not trust the rats."

"But the red-haired barbarians of Formosa, from whom my father has just returned, are they of the same race?"

"Not so, my son, these Dutch dogs are from a distant country called Holland, where the people are so miserably poor they cannot afford even a king."

"Then why, O my father, were such pauper barbarians permitted to place the soles of their feet on the land of Formosa?"

"By fraud and artifice the rogues obtained their hold. During a tempest one of their vessels was driven upon the coast: the crew finding the island to be well situated to their wants, partly by presents, partly by force, persuaded the simple inhabitants to give them only as much land as could be encompassed by the hide of an ox, when the rogues cut the hide into thousands of narrow slips, tied them end to end and therewith measured the earth, to the great surprise and indignation of the inhabitants, who, however, were too powerless to offer resistance. In a short

time they were joined by multitudes of their country menand erected yonder fort, which they call the Castle of Zealand."

"Surely the fleet of my father can exterminate these wasps?" said the boy, whom I shall for the future call by his Christian name of Nicholas.

But as at that moment an officer entered the cabin and reported the approach of a strange ship, father and son went on deck, prepared to give either a salute to a friend or a broadside to a foe.

The vessel proving to be a war junk and carrying the dragon flag of the Emperor, they fired a salute of respect, when a signal was made from the junk that she had on board the Mandarin, or Deputy-Governor of Amoy, with a secret communication for the illustrious merchant Chin-chi-Loong, whereupon the chief bowed respectfully at the name of so great a personage, and prepared to receive him with all the customary tedious formalities.

This visit from so important a personage very much puzzled Nicholas, who stood the whole time the mandarin was closeted with his father, leaning against a gun, in deep thought. When the mandarin had finished and the official had taken his departure, Nicholas returned to the cabin, where he found the chief sitting thoughtfully with his hand upon the satin wrapper of a letter, which from the great seals affixed and the characters Hong Fong (guarded and sealed), he knew must be of great importance and from some high personage.

"My information is truthful," said the chief;

"there is treason among the lords of the court, and the dogs believing Chin-Chi-Loong to be as vile as themselves, have offered him the title of King and the island of Formosa, if he will aid them with his ships, wealth, and men."

"What answer made my honorable father?" said Nicholas.

"A promise to consent, that the traitors may be caught like rats in a trap."

"Surely this is not well, for why need the brave stoop to such villainy?" replied the youth boldly.

Not noticing this reply, the chief became pensive for a few minutes, then exclaimed, "Would that I could place a letter in the hands of the Son of Heaven himself"

"Surely that cannot be a difficulty," said Nicholas.

"Alas! my son, Wey-t-song is so resigned to his pleasures and the company of the vile bonzes, that the audience-denying tablet is forever suspended at the gates of the inner palace."

"Truly it is a maxim that nothing is impossible to the brave. Let my father place the letter in the hands of his son, and it shall reach the imperial eyes!"

For a minute the chief gazed proudly at the boy, then passing his hand across his eyes as if to chase away some sad thought, said, "It shall be so, but for nothing less than the safety of his Emperor would Chin-Chi-Loong risk the life of his only son; but haste, and assume the dress of a traveling merchant, while I prepare these important characters."

Without another word Nicholas left the cabin, returning, however, shortly afterward, dressed in a plain robe of coarse brown silk, with a girdle of the same color, a couple of short swords beneath his garment, and thick staff of bamboo.

"This promptness is good and bespeaks success," said the chief, laying his hand on a letter which was enclosed in three wrappers of satin, the outer being sealed in many places, adding, "Secure this packet beneath thy inner robe, for upon its safety may depend the fate of the empire. I know not by what means thou mayest reach the Emperor, therefore, when in Pekin it would be well to seek the merchant Yang, in the great square, who will aid the son of the great merchant of the south." Then taking another letter from the table, he added, "As you pass through the city of Hang-tcheou, seek out Father Adam, the chief priest of the Christians, and place this in his hands; but guard it well, for the contents are such that were they to meet the eyeballs of the bonzes it might prove thy destruction."

Then placing a valuable ring on the boy's finger and telling him to take what silver he might require, till he reached the merchant of Pekin, who would supply him with more, he bid farewell to Nicholas, who, signalling one of the consort ships, went on board, and was soon landed at the port of Amoy.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEMON SHIP.—THE BOY CHOW.

TAKING a passage in a merchant junk bound to the port of Ning-Po, Nicholas continued his journey for some days without meeting with any event of importance. The voyage was, however, rendered very tedious by the idolatry of the sailors, who spent a great portion of their time in offering up presents to a dirty little wooden god stuck behind a small oil lamp, the odor from which was any thing but agreeable. They would moreover frequently stop the ship to offer meat and incense to the images of the sea goddess Ma-tsoo-po, which are perched upon almost every promontory upon the Chinese coast.

They had been at sea, or rather along the coast, for these sailors never venture far from land, six days, when the murky atmosphere, the heavy swell of the waves as they rolled inward, and the fluttering flight of the sea-fowl, betokened a coming storm; and the crew, trembling with fear, thought of little else but making offerings to the dirty little god, praying of him to stop the storm. A sailor and a Christian from his childhood, Nicholas was no less disgusted with their cowardice than their foolish su-

perstition, and really fearing that the ship would be dashed to pieces upon a rock, he earnestly entreated them to exert themselves. His efforts, however, were useless, for their faith was firm in the power of their gods, whose protection they sought to purchase in the following curious manner:—

Taking a quantity of gilt paper, kept on board for the purpose, they cut it into the shape of copper tchen, the only coin in the empire, and threw them into the sea as a bribe to the goddess Ma-tsoo-po; but finding that the marine lady's favor was not to be bought so cheaply, the whole crew began to busy themselves in building a paper ship, which, by the way, was so ingeniously constructed that it formed an exact model of their own junk, being complete with masts, ropes, sails, flags, compass, rudder, a crew, victuals, and even a book of accounts.

When this redoubtable vessel was finished they let it into the sea with great ceremony, and amidst the deafening clatter of drums and instruments, and their own shoutings to the goddess, to wreak her vengeance upon the toy instead of her adorers' ship.

Nevertheless the hard-hearted goddess was not to be caught with tinsel, for the storm raged with such terrible violence that the frail bark would speedily have been dashed to atoms but for Nicholas, who, after persuading a few of the least obstinate of the men to help him, set to work and managed to keep her head so straight that they passed through the channel without touching the rocks by which it

was bounded on either side. So fearful was the hurricane of circular winds that the shivering crew could see trees torn up by the roots as easily as corks out of bottles by corkscrews. At length, however, the storm subsided, and the sailors believing that nothing less than a deity could have enabled their vessel to live in such a storm, fell upon their knees before Nicholas and thanked him for quelling the fury of the elements.

"Let my brothers toss their stupid idol into the sea, and offer up thanks to the One true God of heaven, who alone has saved them," said the boy.

Enraged at this insult to their god, the sailors gave full vent to their disapprobation, and would have tossed the bold youth into the sea but for a sudden cry from the look-out man.

"The wasps of the ocean! the wasps of the ocean are upon us!"

At this cry the crew took alarm, and ran to different parts of the vessel, and armed themselves with pikes, swords, or any weapon upon which they could place their hands.

Taking the glass from the trembling hands of the look-out man, Nicholas endeavored to make out the cause of the alarm. It was a large floating object at a great distance, and bore some resemblance to a ship, still, notwithstanding the track it left behind in the water, he was doubtful; but before he could make up his mind the captain snatched the glass from his hands, glanced through it, declared his opinion that it was a wasp of the ocean, or pirate,

and ordered his vessel to be put back, with the hope of outrunning her.

Then the first officer took the glass, and after gazing for some time, said, "Truly, my brothers, this is no ship, but a frightful demon that the insulted Ma-tsoo-po has sent from the bottom of the sea to devour us for carrying this impious youth."

This was sufficient for the superstitious fear of the the crew, who, clustering toward Nicholas, with one voice cried, "Over the side with the irreligious dog."

Seeing no other chance, the boy ran to the stern of the vessel, and, keeping them at a distance with his sword, said, "Let my brothers open their ears. Their servant has brought this calamity upon them, but will yet save them from the anger of the demon by seeking him before he reaches the vessel, for surely the demon will be satisfied with one victim."

"The boy's words are good, and if he will pay for the boat it shall be so, otherwise it is not well that we should lose its value," said the artful captain, fearing he should lose any money Nicholas might have about his person.

"Back, rat!" said he to the advancing captain, keeping him off with his sword and springing sideward on to the edge of the junk, adding, "Lower the boat, with provisions, and I will give you silver; refuse, and I will leap into the sea."

Fearing he would keep his word, the crew placed some rice cakes and a small water cask in the boat

and lowered it; and when Nicholas saw it fairly afloat, and held but by one cord, he scrambled down the side like a cat, drew his sword across the rope, threw a handful of silver upon the deck, and pulled so hard at the oars that in a very short time he was far out of the cowards' reach and on his way to the floating demon; which, however he had no sooner caught full sight of than he laughed till he could handle the oars no longer, for the terrible demon who had scared the wits of the sailors proved to be neither more nor less than a great tree which the circular winds had wrested from the earth with such violence that the root had dragged with it a mass of earth and pebbles sufficient to keep it afloat in a perfectly upright position, when, with its spreading branches and lower boughs, it bore in the distance no bad resemblance to a well-rigged vessel.

Rowing cautiously, for fear the tree might topple over and upset his boat, he heard a faint cry. Surely it could not be human; he listened; again he heard it; and looking upward you may imagine his astonishment at seeing a boy sitting across one of the upper branches.

"Who cries for help?" said Nicholas.

"It is the miserable Chow, who must die if the benevolent stranger will not aid him," was the reply.

"Canst thou swim, O Chow? If so, drop into he water, for I dare not come nearer," said Nicho-s; but scarcely had he spoken when a strong gust of wind toppled the tree over with its great arms

stretched out as if to save itself from falling. For tunately it fell in an opposite direction to the boat. In the fall the boy was dashed so violently upon the water, that becoming instantly senseless he would have sunk but for Nicholas, who, getting hold of the long hair of his head, managed to drag him into the boat. Upon recovering his senses he said, "Alas! then, Yen-Vang has poor Chow after all."

"Thou art far away from the king of the lower regions, my poor Chow," said Nicholas.

"By the social relations, I am alive and on earth —no, on water—and ungrateful to the benevolent stranger," said the boy, holding his head with both hands, as if the better to comprehend his situ ation.

"Satisfy thy hunger and say how it happened that Chow came to be perched like a wild goose on a masthead," said Nicholas, giving the boy some of the rice cakes, which he devoured as ravenously as if he had not tasted food for a week.

The lad, who had so unexpectedly made the acquaintance of Nicholas, was a tall, bony youth of about sixteen, with a broad forehead, sparkling black eyes, and covered with a coarse robe, so torn and tattered, that he might have passed for a beggar of the lowest class.

When he had satisfied his hunger, Chow clasped the knees of his new friend, and with tears of grati tude flowing down his cheek, said, "Chow will be thy slave, O generous stranger, for truly it could be for no other purpose that the gods have saved his life."

"Tush! talk not of slavery or gods, Chow, but say what is thy name, surname, and the rank of thy family," said Nicholas.

"Truly, the story of Chow is as miserable as his own mean person. I am from Tun-Hien, in Ching-Foo, in the province of Tche-Kiang. My father was a mandarin of the fifth rank, who having taken a good degree, held office under the governor of the fort, till one moon since, when the terrible rebel, Li-Kong, took possession of the city in defiance of the Son of Heaven himself, and massacred all who would not submit; my father being one of the first to acknowledge the traitor, became the first to be punished for his disloyalty to our holy Emperor, which happened as thy servant will relate.

"One day, my mother, who was accounted very handsome, so far forgot the social regulations laid down for women, as to stand gazing from a window while a body of soldiers passed through the street. For that unbecoming act, both my venerable father and myself suffered, for the officer clattered at the door, when the servants not daring to refuse so powerful a personage, admitted him to the house, when he ran into the inner apartment of my mother, who was so alarmed at such barbarian behavior, that she rose to leave, when the villain would have carried her away but for thy insignificant servant, who clutched his throat and so gashed his cheek that the waters even of the yellow stream will never wash them out.

"Hearing the struggle, the soldiers came to

the rogue's help, and would have killed poor Chow, but for my father, who, returning at the moment, compelled the officer, bad and bold as he was, to make his escape; but, alas! no sooner had the rogue left, than instead of being grateful, my father burst into loud lamentations, crying, 'Alas, alas! that ever so mean a person was born, for thou hast insulted the chief favorite of the prince, who will assuredly be revenged;' and so it proved, for the next day we were all taken before the prince, who ordered the whole family to be exterminated, and our house burnt to the ground; but what was worse, alas! my father was not even strangled, but disgraced by being sent to the yellow stream incomplete, for he was beheaded on the spot, and the villain officer begged his wife as a slave, to which, in her misery, my mother offered to consent if they would but spare the life of thy miserable servant, her son. To this the prince consented, but the officer was so enraged at the wound in his cheek, that he ordered me to be dressed in beggar's rags, and beaten out of the town toward the sea. Accordingly the wretches beat me till I could not stand, and left me to starve and die or the sea-shore.

"For days and days I wandered in the hope that some fisherman would take compassion upon me; but alas! none dared to encourage so treasonous a youth for fear of suffering similar punishment; then, but for the hope that retaining my miserable existence would some fortunate day enable me to punish the villain, I should have thrown myself into the sea, although

even that consolation I could not seek without impiously forgetting my duty to my father, for has it not been wisely said that we should not live beneath the same heaven with the destroyer of our parents?"

"It is a pagan doctrine, Chow; but how came you upon yonder perch?" said Nicholas.

"Without hope, tired, and sad, I wandered along the coast till the great storm sent the terrified wild animals in all directions; to escape from them I climbed a tree upon the very verge of the sea, when shortly afterward the wind-demon blew one great gust which carried it into the sea, where its great spreading root and the earth around kept it floating till the benevolent stranger came to my rescue."

"Thou shalt be revenged upon this villain officer, my poor Chow, and upon the greater rogue, Li-Kong," said Nicholas.

"How,—what words are these? surely the benevolent stranger cannot be in his senses to speak thus of men so powerful," replied the astonished Chow.

"What would Chow do to obtain the punishment of his enemies? Would he faithfully serve the stranger who has saved his life?"

"If these are the words of truth,—and who is thy mean servant that he should doubt?—O wonderful stranger, Chow will be thy slave till he goes to meet his ancestors."

"Then, surely as I have spoken, it shall be so. But how wouldst thou know this vile rogue again?"

"Is it possible for a son to forget the slayer of his parent, even if the wound in his face would not be-

tray him?" said Chow, who gazing earnestly in the face of Nicholas, added, "Art thou really a boy or a man of short measure?"

"Truly, like thyself, a boy of long measure and ample fullness, whose mean surname is Nicholas,' said the other laughing.

"No, no, noble Nicholas, not like Chow; for if a boy, thou art like him who became the Emperor Tait-sou, a little great man-boy," said Chow.

CHAPTER III.

ADVENTURES AT SEA.—RESCUE.

HAVING recovered his strength, Chow took a turn at the oars, and for an hour pulled lustily, to get as far from the coast as possible, for fear of being observed by any straggling party of the rebels who might pursue them, when, if they searched Nicholas and discovered the letter, farewell to the sea chief's schemes. This fear, however, soon became absorbed in a greater; night came on, and brave sailor as he was, Nicholas did not fancy being upon that stormy sea in such a fragile boat.

Then Nicholas took the oars, and had not been pulling long, when he perceived the glimmering of a light in the distance. He rested for a moment; the light grew larger and nearer: this was hopeful; it might be the lantern of a trading ship; yet fearful, for it might be a pirate. The suspense was terrible, and like a gallant fellow he determined to end it as soon as possible; for this purpose he pulled heartily, and was rewarded at length by getting near enough to the stranger to distinguish voices, then a few long pulls, and strong pulls, and he reached the ship, when by the light from her lanterns perceiving some ropes hanging out, he clambered up her side, telling

Chow to follow. In another second they both stood upon the deck, but also in the arms of men, who would have stabbed them with their knives but for the presence of mind of our hero, who exclaimed, "Fear not, brothers of the sea, we are not pirates."

The men, however, not being so easily appeased, bound the arms of the boys with ropes and took them into the presence of the captain, much to the disgust of Chow, who said, "Truly it is a maxim that a servant should follow his master, but our career will be one of short measure by this strange frolic, O noble Nicholas."

"Silence, Chow, let not thy heart leap between thy lips at the first threat of danger," said Nicholas angrily.

The bravest war tiger would become a mouse with his body packed as closely as a cotton ball," said Chow surlily.

The captain, however, no sooner saw Nicholas, than with a start of surprise he ordered the sailors to leave the cabin, and took up a large knife from the cabin table, when the terrified Chow cried, "Take the worthless life of thy mean slave, O noble commander, but in the name of thy ancestors spare my noble master."

Chow's fear became surprise in no small degree when the captain, without noticing his prayer, not only cut the cords from the arms of Nicholas, but made him a respectful bow.

"Thanks, worthy commander," said Nicholas, taking the knife and releasing Chow.

"Truly the heavens have tumbled down a surprise," said Chow, with a caper, adding, "Is the noble man-boy a good demon, that he can transform enemies into friends with a glance of his eye?"

Without, however, satisfying Chow, Nicholas asked the captain to give the boy a sleeping mat in another cabin, after which he said, "It is well, O Yung, that you chanced to be at sea this night, or my noble parent would have had to mourn his son." But little more passed, for Nicholas was glad to seek a long rest, and possession of the sleeping mat which the captain resigned to him.

The reason of this civility is easily explained—the vessel itself belonged to the sea chief, and its commander was one of his officers in charge on a voyage to Ning-Po, which port they reached the following day. Having landed, the boys took leave of the captain, and sought a lodging at one of the largest inns, where, after resting for a few days, Nicholas began to prepare for his journey inland.

His first care was to furnish Chow with a becoming robe of stout silk, a cap, trousers, and thick-soled leather boots. As soon as the boy had put them on he began to caper about, crying, "My master is generous, and the gods will reward him for making a poor boy decent enough to pay due reverence to the tombs of his ancestors, for truly he could not worthily sweep the dust from their resting-place in such unbecoming tatters; for

although Chow is poor, he is of worthy descent and honorable relations."

"Truly, Chow, thou art now fit to take a degree at the next examination at Pekin, if we ever arrive there," said Nicholas.

"It is not reasonable that the noble Nicholas should laugh at his mean servant, for at the examination of his Hien he passed so creditably through the first two sacred books, that he would have obtained a government promotion but for the villain who destroyed his house. *May his soul pass into the body of a rat!*" said Chow gloomily.

"Pardon, O disappointed scholar. It was villainous to laugh, for it is a wise saying, 'that the well to do should sympathize with the unfortunate,'" said Nicholas, adding, as he took his cap, "But let us now seek for a passage-boat, for it is also wisely said, 'that the loiterer about the business of another is incapable of conducting his own affairs.'"

When they reached the river, they engaged a passage to Hang-tcheou, and having waited for a favorable tide, the barge was soon out of the river into a canal, upon which for days they proceeded, at times being pushed along by poles thrust into the water, at others, being drawn along by coolies, or porters, an employment that affords a means of existence to a vast portion of the population of China.

Tche-Kiang, through which they so leisurely traveled, is, perhaps, the most fertile and beautiful of the eighteen provinces of China, and large

enough to contain the whole of Scotland and its adjacent islands. Besides rivers, it is watered by some sixty canals, which serve not only as an easy method of transit, but so to irrigate the great plains around that they yield crops of rice, pulse, and cotton, twice and sometimes thrice a year. It was pleasant to watch these canals pouring forth their sparkling limpid streams to lave the feet of the neighboring hills and mountains, which for many miles presented an aspect of singular beauty; some, like carved and nature painted pyramids, being wrought into terraces, which shot one out of the other, teeming with the yellow grain, cotton, or tea-trees, while others were thickly sprinkled with shady trees, which waved over sloping cemeteries of quaintly shaped tombs and temples. It was a charming picture—nature dressed to the verge of foppery—more, it was a glorious land, and smiling as if in pride at its power of blessing the human race—and more again, that its owners knew its worth and industriously stretched its blessings to the utmost.

Then the boat came to a dike, or sluice, and they were about to enter another canal at least fifteen fee beneath their level. To pass this, the barge wa hoisted by Coolies up an inclined plain of freestone by means of ropes upon capstans and sheer strength of muscle, then gently let down a slope upon the other side into the water, a mode adopted to the present day to move even the largest vessels from canal to canal.

Thus pleasantly the young travelers were wafted

through the province, now through vast plains of rice, then by the sides of great hills clustering with the tea-plant, on again through vast orchards of mulberry-trees and the useful and curious tallow-plant; then again through plantations of bamboo, that inseparable companion of the Chinaman from the cradle to the grave—for it receives the infant, corrects the boy, is the means of living for the man, and entwines the corpse. Then again they passed through towns and cities, swarming with busy workers at the silk-loom and multifarious handicrafts, and toiling children, women, and men in the fields, till they passed another dike, and then they were upon the beautiful lake Tsao-hou, about the naming of which the following pretty story is told:—

"Many years ago there lived a priest of the Taouist religion, who had obtained a reputation for his skill in magic. At the festival of the feast of dragon boats, the priest went to sport in the river in honor of his gods, but by some mischance he was drowned, and his body no where to be found. His dutiful daughter, Tsao-hou, a girl fourteen years of age, felt her father's loss so deeply that she wandered along the banks of the river for seventeen days and nights, weeping and wailing over her loss. At last she threw a large melon into the river, putting up the prayer, 'May this melon sink wherever the body of my father lieth.' With anxious eyes she watched the gourd as it floated on the surface of the stream, until it stopped at a certain spot where it sank. The poor damsel, frantic with grief, rushed to the place

and plunged after it. She too was drowned, but five days afterward her lifeless trunk rose to the surface with her father's body in her embrace. Both were buried on the river bank, and in commemoration of that incident the name of the girl was given to the lake and a magnificent temple erected to her name."

On the sixth day they came to Chao-hing, the Venice of China, where the canals are so numerous that any portion of the city may be reached by boats. Imagine a city with, in place of streets, one large network of water-roads, intersected with bridges, so light and fanciful that one could imagine them to have been blown together by the breath of fairies, and you will have some notion of Chao-hing.

This city is celebrated alike for its silk-worms and book-worms. So great is the reputation of the scholars of Chao-hing that they are sought for by the viceroys of provinces to fill government offices. Near to this city and not far from the mountain of Asses (so called from its being shaped in the form of that animal) is the sepulchre of the great Emperor Yu, the model sovereign of China.

This prince obtained the throne by having saved the empire from the deluge of water which in his time covered the lands; indeed, he must have been no common engineer, for in thirteen years, by unwearied labor, he leveled high mountains, embanked and confined great rivers within their channels, drained lakes and marshes, enclosed rapid torrents with banks, and divided rivers into canals, which not

only gained a great extent of country, but rendered the whole more fertile. It was the great genius and wonderful energy of Yu that caused the reigning Emperor to choose him for his successor in preference to either of the four princes, his sons.

Among other remarkable things told of this Em peror, it is said that he first taught the people to cul tivate, sow, and manure lands, and divided his dominions into nine provinces, causing as many great brazen vessels to be made, on each of which a map of a province was engraved. In succeeding times these vessels became very precious, for it was believed that the safety of the state depended on their security, and that whoever obtained them would also obtain the crown.

A qualification rare amongst kings was possessed by this useful prince. He hated flatterers, and the only way to gain his favor was to tell him of his faults. Moreover, Yu thought no employment so becoming a sovereign as doing justice to the people; thus he gave access to his subjects at all hours, and that no obstacle might be thrown in their way, he had affixed to his palace gates a bell, a drum, and three tables, one of iron, one of stone, and another of lead, upon either of which people who wanted an audience were to strike.

The bell was to distinguish civil affairs, the drum for matters relating to law or religion, the leaden table for the ministers, the tablet of stone to denote a complaint of wrong done by some magistrate, and lastly the iron tablet was to denote any very

serious trouble. So rigorously did Yu adhere to this rule, that it is said that he arose from table twice in one day, and another day came three times out of his bath at the sound of the bell.

Another story is, that when wine, which was first invented in his reign, was shown to him, he expressed great regret, "for," said he, "this liquor will cause the greatest trouble to the empire." But wise and powerful as he was, Yu could not conquer sensuality; for in China, as in most other countries, the love for strong liquors is potent.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INNKEEPER.—ALARMING NEWS.

For six more days the boys sailed along this canal till they came to Hang-tcheou-Fou, the terrestrial paradise of China, of which, in conjunction with another great city, the people have a saying, "Heaven is above, but Hang-tcheou and Foo-tcheou are below." As a combination of work and pleasure, a great manufacturing city, and a fashionable and healthful watering-place, this spot has not its equal in the world; for as the province of Tche-Kiang is the most celebrated in the empire for its growth of mulberry-trees and the finest silk-worms, so is its capital, Hang-tcheou, celebrated for its looms and the quality and quantity of those rare silks, satins, and taffetas, which no less gladdened the eyes of the moderns than they surprised and delighted the wealthy Romans, who, not knowing from whence they came, believed them to be the handiwork of "furthest Ind."

Not alone the Manchester, but the Bath or Cheltenham of China, this city is also famous for its scholars, and as being the residence of the fashionables, if such a term may be used to a people who are proverbial for having kept in manners, customs, laws,

religion, and dress, and even ideas, with little exception, to the pattern men and women, fashioned and shaped by their early Emperors, Yaou and Yu, some four thousand years ago; for the latter perhaps Hang-tcheou is chiefly indebted to its vicinage to the celebrated lake See-ho. The waters are so clear that the smallest pebbles may be seen shining like crystals from the bottom. In the middle are two islands adorned with temples and houses, wherein water parties, after taking their pleasure upon the lake, resort for rest and refreshment. Upon piles driven into the bed of the lake are large stone walks or pathways for pedestrians, which stretch from the banks to the islands, with openings for boats, across which are thrown fancifully wrought bridges. The banks are studded with temples, mansions, monasteries, for the bonzes or priests of Buddah, as also a small but beautiful palace for the use of the Emperor, when he makes a tour through his southern provinces.

Near to this lake, and reposing in a valley beneath the foot of a mountain, upon the summit of which, as if in guard over the dead for the past forty centuries, the huge Lui-fung-ta, or tower of thundering winds, is the great cemetery, or vale of tombs, a city in size, which is kept reverentially clean, and strewn at stated periods with fresh flowers, over which forests of willows weep for the departed.

One of the chief beauties of this famous lake I had almost forgotten to mention. Its sides, where the water is shallow, are covered with the clustering and rare flowers, Lien-hoa, a plant so choice that it is

fostered in the innermost recesses of the houses of the great and wealthy. Not unlike our own tulips, the Lien-hoa has a little ball supported by a small filament similar to that formed in lilies; its color varies, being at times violet, white, or a mixture of red and white; it emits a fragrant odor; the fruit is as big as a small nut, and the kernel is white and of good taste. The physicians esteem it, and prescribe it for weak patients. The leaves are long, and swim upon the water, communicating with the root by long strings. The dense population, which has rendered it necessary to turn every atom to account, has led the busy-bee genius of the people to make every particle of this plant useful. The before-mentioned strings are used by the gardeners to wrap round their goods, and the white and pulpy root is eaten in summer for its cooling properties.

Although mid-day when they arrived at this city, you will not wonder that it was nearly dark by the time they reached the gates, when I tell you that the river was one vast floating town of vessels, the greater part of which were arranged into streets, crowded with passing mandarin junks laden with pleasure parties, and decorated with japan, gilding, silk streamers, and that emblem of rank, the umbrella; government junks, some of war, and others freighted with rice, silks, and other matters, which had been given by the different townspeople as taxes in lieu of money; then numerous junks laden with salt and other commodities, to say nothing of the many thousands of San-pans or egg-house boats, in

which a vast portion of the poorer section of the Chinese reside, never being permitted to come ashore without especial permission from the governor; then again, the floating islands of trees, with their huts formed of poles and matting of bamboo. Indeed just such a scene is a picture of the every-day life presented on the canals and rivers of this country; but particularly in the southern provinces, which so swarm with human beings, that thousands are compelled from want of room on land to take refuge on the water, where they not only live, but carry on their various avocations.

Notwithstanding the haste of the boys to enter the city, as they passed through the gates the great bell above them began to sound the first of the five watches or divisions into which the night is divided, and the crowds who thronged the narrow streets began to scamper in every direction to their homes, for the law of China very wisely holds "that the daylight is for labor and the night for repose." Greatly fatigued, the young travelers sought the first inn where they regaled themselves with a plentiful meal, foolishly forgetting the passing time: indeed, before they had finished, they heard the sound of the second watch, when the landlord made his appearance and begged of his honorable guests to take their departure, much to the surprise of Nicholas, who had resolved to go no further that night. "Surely," said he, "the perfection of innkeepers would not turn away travelers who are willing to pay for their entertainment and lodging."

"From what distant province can the honorable youth have journeyed, that he knows not that the inns are full of the servants and officers of the illustrious Ching-Ti, who has this day arrived, to fill with his form of full measure the governor's sedan, and judgment seat?" said the innkeeper.

"Truly the worthy innkeeper will pardon his younger brother for observing that the name of the Mandarin of Hang-tcheou is Yang-ti, or the eyeballs of his humble guest have become twisted, for Yang-ti is the name upon this chop," replied Chow, producing a kind of passport which had been given to him at the custom-house before entering the city.

"Where have been the ears of my honorable guest that he has not heard that the noble Yang has completed the measure of his joys and sorrows in this world?"

"Surely the noble governor cannot have passed so suddenly to the yellow stream or the shadow kingdom of Yen-Vang," said Chow.

"There can be no doubt that it is a sad history, for greatly was the good Yang loved, not only in this his last province, but in all those over which he had ruled, never having retired from a government without receiving the boots of honor," replied the innkeeper.

It may be as well to explain to you, that when the governor of a city removes to another province, the people exhibit their approbation of his wisdom and justice by paying him great honor. When he com-

mences his journey he finds, for a considerable distance along the road, tables covered with silk placed at certain intervals, upon some of which are laid burnt perfumes, candlesticks, waxlights, meats, pulse, and fruits; and upon others, wine, and tea, ready for use. As soon as the popular mandarin appears, the people fall upon their knees, bow their heads and weep, offer him the things upon the tables, and present him with a pair of new boots; they then pull off his old ones, and preserve them as relics in a small cage, which they hang over the gates of the city through which he passed.

"Will the worthy innkeeper relate the ill-doings that could have brought this good magistrate to misfortune?" said Nicholas, guessing at the innkeeper's meaning.

"Truly it was no less than a fondness for the religion of the Fan-Kwi."

"Surely that could be no crime under our good Emperor, who has befriended the Christians, even to permitting the members of his family to become followers of the Lord of Heaven," said Nicholas.

"It is true that the information may be incorrect, but such has fallen into thy servant's ears; moreover it is said that the great Yang's conduct has offended the bonzes at Pekin, who are all-powerful in the palace of the Son of Heaven, whom they persuaded to send the Christian-exterminating Lord Ching-Ti, with an order signed by the vermilion pencil, to put Yang to death."

"Has the vile deed been performed?" said Nicholas hastily.

"Hush!" said the host in a low tone. "Surely such language will bring a heavy punishment upon thy head."

"Has the noble mandarin suffered, O worthy man?" said Nicholas, whose rising indignation outweighed his prudence.

"It has been wisely said, that it is of little use to repine at what can't be recalled," replied the innkeeper, adding, "The soul of the great Yang is now in search of a better habitation, but he left this world with dignity, for the Son of Heaven, *may he continue the circle of succession*, remembering his servant's good deeds, mercifully permitted him to be his own executioner, and, moreover, gave him the choice either of the silken cord, the gold leaf, or his own state necklace."

"Truly if the great lords esteem these things as favors, thanks be to Tien that thy servant is but a small weasel of a personage," said Chow, making some very remarkable grimaces.

"When the noble Yang received the message, he called for the incense table, burned perfume in honor of his royal master, chose the silken cord, and having held it high above his head in token of his willingness to obey the royal will, immediately strangled himself," said the innkeeper, without noticing Chow's interruption.

That the boys did not shudder at this recital, may surprise you who are not perhaps aware that this

is a common method of showing the royal gratitude for past services in the middle kingdom. Not only are these three methods used as punishments, but as a means of suicide, which in China, as in most unchristianized countries, is esteemed a meritorious means of slipping through a difficulty. The gold leaf being taken in the form of a pill, is washed down with water, which is supposed so to expand the leaf and extend the stomach that life soon becomes extinct. The death by the necklace is more uncommon. There is a bird of the crane kind, on the crown of whose head is a scarlet tuft of down or velvet skin, to which the Chinese believe the poison of the serpents which it eats determines. This crest is frequently formed into a bead which is concealed in the ornamental necklaces worn by the high officers of the empire, for the express purpose of surmounting worldly difficulties, for let this venom but touch the lip, and death instantaneously ensues.

There is a legend that the life of this bird extends to one thousand years, that it is in its prime at sixty, when it can sing regularly and beautifully every hour of the day, but that it cannot mount trees till it reaches its thousandth year.

When the innkeeper had finished, the clanging of the watchman's bamboo rattle in the streets reminded Nicholas of the lateness of the hour, and he said, "But, even now, the worthy innkeeper has not informed his younger brothers where they may find a lodging for the night.

"Thy servant, noble youth, must have been born in an unfortunate hour, that he cannot offer the advantages of his inn, but the truth has been spoken, none but the servants and officers of the great Ching-Ti can rest here to-night."

"Surely taels of silver are not so plentiful in this city that all will refuse," said Chow.

"Truly for less than an ounce of silver two travelers might find a lodging in the house of the bonzes."

"The priests of Fo are rogues," said Nicholas, giving utterance to an opinion that has been popular in China from all time.

"The noble youth possesses a tongue that will place him in the cangue, or procure him a branded cheek by this hour to-morrow, if he rules it no better," said the innkeeper; but before the boy could reply, the man's wife ran into the room, crying and beating her breast, and implored of her husband to follow her to the bedside of their dying daughter.

Shocked that they had been the means of keeping the man from so holy a duty, Nicholas apologized, and was about leaving the house, when with an hysterical laugh, the man said, "See, O honorable youths, this woman has but little faith in the power of the holy bonzes, who have been offering sacrifices to Fo, to save the life of this pearl of my existence."

"By what means, O foolish man, can these bonzes save thy child's life? Are not the physicians of Hang-tcheou famous for their skill?"

"Truly they are less than mice; they could not save my child, and I have dismissed them for a holy bonze, whose influence over the god who protects the lives of the young, has made him promise that my pearl shall not become dissolved in death."

"She is passing from us now, O my husband," said the unhappy wife.

"It cannot be, woman; the god is but chastising you with a terrible fear, for your want of faith; for how is it possible he can refuse so trifling a favor as the life of a young girl, when I have daily offered sacrifices of animals, and money, and burned incense at his altar?"

Shocked at the man's superstitious belief in the power of Fo, and his brother idols, Nicholas made one other effort to shake it; finding, however, that it was useless, he paid the bill, purchased a lantern for himself and another for Chow, and they went on their way to the Buddhist monastery, the only house wherein he could find shelter for that night.

CHAPTER V.

ADVENTURE IN A BUDDHIST MONASTERY.—CHOW'S ENCOUNTER WITH A BONZE.

To Londoners who find it an easy matter to pass, at any time of the night, from one end of the metropolis to the other, it may appear that Nicholas and Chow had no very difficult task before them. Such however, was not the case, for in the first place, instead of open thoroughfares, the great streets of the cities of China are barricaded at the ends with chains, and the smaller ones with wicket-gates, at each of which is placed a watchman, whose business it is to question every pedestrian, and through the night to keep clanging a piece of hard wood against a hollow bamboo cane, for the purpose of showing his watchfulness.

As the boys, by aid of their lanterns picked their way through the streets, they found them deserted; with the exception of a few stragglers, each of whom carried a lantern, upon which was ostentatiously emblazoned his name and rank. Imagine all the gas lamps in London extinguished, and their places supplied by a few dancing will-o'-the-wisp kind of lanterns, and you will have a tolerable notion of the appearance of the great cities of China by night. Dismal, truly, but perhaps not more so than were the

streets of London not many years since, when they were lighted by flickering oil lamps. Again, as were those of London at the very period when these adventures happened, the streets are so narrow that a good-sized carriage or wagon cannot pass through without danger to the people, but then the narrowness of the streets was less pardonable in Londoners of that age, than in the Chinese of the present, whose great people ride in sedan-chairs, and whose little people walk, and convey their goods to and fro in narrow carts, like barrows, with one centre wheel. The Celestials are at least consistent in fitting their vehicles to their streets, which is more than could be said of old London, with its gutter streets and heavy lumbering coaches, types of which may be seen every day in the London of the present time.

The street in which the inn was situated was one of the principal, and, therefore, of great length, and along the pavement, which was in the middle of the road, the boys trudged onward, passing every now and then beneath one of the numerous Pai-ho, or arches, which are erected to the memory of good magistrates and virtuous women, till they came to a lattice-gate which led into a smaller street, when their progress was arrested, for the watchman was not at his post. They waited for some time, till becoming impatient, Chow kicked the gate, when there arose such a queer hissing noise, that the boy fell upon his face, exclaiming, "My master, my master, the demons of Yen-Vang have swallowed the watchman, and are guarding the gate in his stead."

"Thou art a foolish coward," said Nicholas, who clambered up the gate, and after looking through the wicket for a minute let go his hold and laughed immoderately. "O Chow, Chow, thou idiot! not to know a demon from one of thine own kind; surely these demons are nothing but geese;" and as the watchman opened the wicket Chow saw that the noise which had alarmed him had been caused by a couple of those birds, which the watchman had trained to cackle and hiss at the slightest noise, so that he might take a comfortable nap, with the certainty of being aroused when wanted by the hissing.

"Truly they must be barbarian geese, for I should have understood them had they cackled in Chinese," said Chow.

To get the gate open was one thing, to pass through another, for perceiving neither name nor rank upon the lanterns, the watchman determined to detain the boys as suspicious characters, and for that purpose began to clang upon his bamboo for assistance, when a personage came up to the wicket, and both the watchman and Chow bent their heads respectfully. From the yellow robe, the string of beads around his neck, and his shaven head, Nicholas saw that he was a bonze, or priest of Fo. As this reverend gentleman came through the gate he ran his fingers up and down the beads, and muttered, "O Mi to-fo," and so would have passed, but for Chow, who said, "Will the man of prayer pardon an insignificant mouse for interrupting his holy meditations?"

"The dogs are vagabonds, perhaps robbers, who

have no name, surname, or profession on their lan terns, O holy bonze," said the polite watchman.

"What would the nameless night prowlers with the priest of Buddha?" said the bonze.

"Truly nothing but a guide to the monastery, where they seek a lodging for which they pray of the holy father to accept alms."

At the word alms the eyes of the bonze sparkled with delight, and having lifted his lantern so as to get a full view of Nicholas, he said to the watchman, "Thou rascal! thy dog's head hath less brains than these geese, and thine eyeballs are of lead, or thou wouldst have seen that so well-looking a youth must be of honorable descent; moreover, where was thy charity, that thou wouldst not aid a traveler?"

"Surely the man would be wanting in sense who should suppose that he had the wisdom and divining power of a holy bonze," replied the trembling guardian of the night.

Not deigning, however to notice this observation, the bonze conducted the boys along several streets, till they reached a building surrounded by a high wall, through which, by means of a small gate, they passed to an avenue of magnificent trees, paved with marble, and which led to a large gateway, guarded upon each side by a very ugly stone god. Passing through the gateway, they entered a small room lighted from the centre by one large lantern, decorated with portraits of the god Fo, in every variety of character. This god, as you may probably know, is represented by almost every kind of animal,

biped and quadruped, into which during the lapse of centuries his soul is supposed to have passed. Around this room, which was for every day use, were small idols of gilt copper, with ghos-sticks burning before them; on the table, in the centre of the room, stood a time measure, that must remind you of the period of our own King Alfred. It is termed the hourly incense-stick, and is notched at equal distances, and as from notch to notch the stick takes exactly one hour to burn, it accurately marks the passing time.

This ghos-stick, so named from its being burned as incense in the ghos-houses or temples of China, is compounded of sawdust mixed with glue and scent, and evenly rolled into thin rods of two or three feet in length; in fact, the very same brown stick adopted by smokers in this country for its pleasant perfume, and continuing to burn till reduced to ashes. Having introduced the boys to this room the bonze withdrew, and shortly afterward sent a servant with blankets and sleeping mats, upon which they stretched themselves, not a little pleased at the opportunity of getting a good sleep after their day's fatigue.

Long before morning, however, Nicholas was suddenly aroused from his slumbers, and to his surprise saw the bonze upon the floor, with Chow pummeling him with his fists, and crying, "I have thee, I have thee, thou slayer of people's parents."

Not knowing what to make of this strange scene,

Nicholas caught Chow by the arm and endeavored to pull him away; this, however, served but to excite him the more, for he pummeled at the bonze harder than ever. The behavior of the priest was still more surprising, for instead of showing any indignation at this strange treatment, all he said was, "Harm the youth not my son; he is possessed with a demon; he sleeps, poor boy, and mistakes me for some terrible enemy."

This explanation Nicholas soon found to be correct, for poor Chow had been battling in his sleep; but how the bonze came into the boy's clutches was a mystery, and one that, worn out as he was with fatigue, he did not just then care about solving, so that he could get Chow to his mat again, which after considerable trouble he managed, by telling him that he was an officer of justice and would see that his enemy should be punished. After which Nicholas threw himself upon his mat, fell into a sound sleep, and slept till he was awakened by the deep tones of the monastery bell.

During the morning meal he related the adventure to the much-puzzled Chow, who could remember nothing but that he had dreamed that the slayer of his father suddenly entered the room, and after prowling about for some time, first searched the robe of Nicholas, and then came to his bed, when, thinking he was going to kill him, he attacked him in self-defence; though how his enemy should have become transformed into the bonze, who certainly had no

business in the room, was a puzzle that he could not make out.

The explanation of the bonze was, that he had entered his visitors' apartment to see that they had been properly attended to by the servant—an explanation not at all satisfactory to Chow, who as soon as the priest left the room said, "Is my master's girdle safe? for these holy fathers are great rogues."

Alarmed for the safety of his letters, Nicholas examined his girdle; they were safe; when shocked at his insinuation, the repentant Chow exclaimed, "Truly, my master, Chow is less than the least of little dogs, and must crave the good father's forgiveness,"—which he took the first opportunity of doing, by falling upon all fours before the priest and knocking his forehead to the ground, till the latter in pity lifted the boy upon his legs again.

CHAPTER VI.

THRASHING THE GODS.—THE BOYS TAKEN PRISONERS.

ANXIOUS to deliver his father's letter to the Christian priest, yet fearful of making inquiries where he was to be found, now he had heard of the governor's enmity to Christianity, Nicholas determined to make the effort alone, and having thanked the bonze for his hospitality and presented him with half an ounce of silver, he was about proceeding in his search, when the latter solicited him to join in the morning prayers of the monastery; a solicitation he was too prudent to refuse, for fear of awakening the suspicions of the bonzes, whom he knew to be the main persecutors of his religion.

As for Chow, like the majority of his countrymen he was of no religion in particular, but a little of each of the sects into which the Chinese are divided; Confucian, Buddhist, and Taouist; he, therefore, willingly followed Nicholas, who, with something like a feeling of disgust, entered a spacious hall, the ceiling of which shone with gold and japan. In the centre were placed three colossal representative gods of the past, present, and future—the Buddha who is, and the Buddha who will be—with a vase of incense and a lamp of burning tea oil before each. At the sound of a small bell, a number of yellow-robed

priests, with heads shaven, clean and oily as bladders of lard, made their appearance and commenced the ceremony; one rang a bell violently, while another clattered like a watchman upon a hollow bamboo cane. This clamor was for the purpose of arousing the attention of the gods, which, after a few minutes, being supposed to be accomplished, the whole society of priests knocked their heads upon the ground repeatedly; and when tired, they began to chant hymns and create a fearful din by playing rough music upon much rougher instruments; after which they marched out of the hall regularly and in double file. Not a little pleased at the conclusion of the ceremony, Nicholas followed, taking care, however, on leaving the building, to choose an opposite direction to the bonzes.

The boys had not walked more than a hundred yards, when they came to the foot of a small hillock, which served as a base or pedestal for a shrine, in which, upon a raised platform, like a small boy upon a tall stool, sat an ugly little god with a dragon's head, so glittering, however, with gold and gaudy colors, that they knew it to be a private idol that some foolish devotee had decorated at his own cost, with a view to obtain some especial service from heaven. When within earshot of this deity, they observed two bonzes come from behind the shrine, attended by a servant, who, having prepared the incense table commenced to bow their heads to the ground and mutter their prayers.

Not wishing either to join in, or interrupt the

priests' devotions, the boys took up their position behind the trunk of a large tree, where they witnessed the following scene:—

Scarcely had the bonzes commenced their head knockings when a mob of the lower class of people, with sticks and hammers in their hands, came clamoring toward the shrine. They were led by a man, who had no sooner reached the astute and kneeling priests, than with one kick he sent them rolling over each other, saying at the same time, "Get thee hence, thou rogues of bonzes, and let us deal with this villainous god." The bonzes, seeing so many persons, arose and scampered off to their monastery for help, when the *leader*, whom Nicholas now recognized as his friend, the innkeeper, approached the idol, saying, "How now, thou dog of a spirit! Have I not fed thee, lodged thee handsomely, and offered incense each day at the cost of half my hard earnings, that thou shouldst save the life of my daughter, who, notwithstanding, has been carried to the yellow stream? Let us punish him, my friends, that he may deceive no other father." As he uttered the last words, he struck off the arm of the god with such force that it struck a bonze, who was at that moment coming toward the idol in advance of some twenty of his brethren; at which the people cried, "This is indeed a just retribution upon the vile bonze."

"Do not the people fear the vengeance of the gods, that they behave thus?" said the stricken priest, calmly, and dissembling his rage.

"Truly the gods may render us unfortunate," said one cowardly fellow, and the superstitious crowd hesitated. Perceiving his advantage, the bonze followed it up. "Surely," said he, "the people are not unreasonable, like this man, who is ungrateful to the gods for taking his daughter, as if, forsooth, his child were better than the children of his neighbors."

"This is true. Why should one complain that he is not more fortunate than the rest?" said the cowardly voice.

"As for the worthy Sing, the gods may pardon him, in consideration of his great grief; but then he must desist from this profanity," said the bonze.

"The bonze is generous, and his words are reasonable," said another.

"Are my friends unjust that they will not listen to an injured man, whose injuries may be their own to-morrow?" said the innkeeper.

"This is reasonable also; let us hear Sing," cried several voices.

At that moment, Nicholas, who feared lest the artful bonzes should get the better of the dispute, came forward, and said, "Why should the worthy Sing waste words? surely he has been sufficiently injured; the measure of his grief is full, for he will leave no descendant to fulfil the necessary offices at his tomb."

"The words of the honorable youth are wise," said the fickle crowd; and Nicholas continued,

"That there has been robbery, there can be no doubt, my friends; for, notwithstanding the god promised to cure the daughter of this worthy man, she has passed to the yellow stream, and, therefore, he is unworthy of his quality of godship, and should be punished; therefore, in justice to the worthy Sing, let this temple be pulled down, and the stupid idol pay the penalty in his own person."

To which the priest endeavored to reply, but the people would not listen to him, and acting upon the suggestion of Nicholas, threw a cord round the god's neck, pulled him to the ground, and belabored him with sticks and hammers.

During the proceeding the priests, who were too wise to lose their tempers, addressed a knot of lookers-on, vehemently threatening them with terrible misfortunes, but at the same time declaring, that if Sing would come to some agreement, the god, who was of a short temper, would do what was reasonable on his part and prevent future evils. This had the desired effect upon all but Sing and some of his friends, who continued to belabor the idol till the converts to the bonze's opinion drove them away, when, becoming broken into antagonistic parties, they threw aside their weapons and fought each other with their fists, till a body of yah-yu, or city police, entered upon the ground, and seizing Sing, the principal bonze, and the two boys, as the chief rioters, hurried them off to the police tribunal.

As for the mob, no sooner had the prisoners been removed, than mortified at the profanity into which

they had been hurried, they gathered together the fragments of the deity, stuck them together as well as possible, washed him, and fell at his feet, exclaiming, "In truth we have been a little too hasty, but then your godship has been a little too slow in performing your promises, and thus brought the beating upon yourself. But still it is a good saying, that 'what has been done can't be undone.' Let us, therefore, think no more of this matter, and if you will forget what has passed we will repair thy temple and gild you over again."

For fear that my reader may think this episode exaggerated, I must assure him that similar scenes are even now of frequent occurrence—and why not? For although idolaters, the Chinese are neither enthusiasts nor fanatics. With the greater part, the worship of idols is an inheritance which it would be impossible to reject;—it is custom they worship. Moreover, like ourselves, they are a business-like people, and will have money's worth for money; therefore, if they pay an idol for a certain quantity of work, and he does not complete his contract, they give him a sound thrashing—and the principle is not bad one after all.

CHAPTER VII.

TREACHERY OF THE BONZES.—NICHOLAS SENT TO PRISON AS A TRAITOR.

With the proverbial rudeness of most small officials, the yah-yu threw cords around the arms of the prisoners and dragged them along the streets, amid the jeers and laughter of the populace, who, enjoyed the prospect of the probable punishment of so serious an offence as rioting, namely, being led about the streets with the cangue, a wooden collar as large as a small table, around their necks; but in this the Chinese crowd was not worse than others in Europe, for, with shame be it said, a tendency to indulge in the minor miseries of their fellows is the cruel propensity of most masses.

When they came to the tribunal they found it crowded with people, who were standing upon either side of the hall, so as to form a lane by which to approach the mandarin, who was sitting at a table, upon which stood a box of bamboo reeds, tipped with yellow; upon his left side sat the secretary, and upon his right stood three men with ominous-looking bamboo canes in their hands, The first case heard was that of a youth whose propensity for gaming had led him to squander a large

sum of money lent to him by his father for the purpose of commencing business. I must tell you however, that before bringing the boy before a tribunal, the father had fruitlessly tried every method of kindness. Having listened patiently, the mandarin severly reprimanded the youth, then taking fifty of the yellow-tipped reeds threw them on the ground as a signal for the men with canes to give him fifty blows. Before, however, they could obey, his mother, with tears in her eyes, threw herself at the mandarin's feet, begging of him to pardon her son. Being a kind-hearted man the magistrate complied, but ordering to be brought to him a volume written by one of the emperors for the instruction of his subjects, and opening it at a particular part, said, "Promise O youth, to renounce gambling and to listen to your father's directions, and I will pardon you this time; but that you may not forget, go and kneel in the gallery of the hall of audience and learn by heart this chapter on filial obedience, which till you repeat and solemnly promise to observe obedience, you shall not depart from this tribunal."

The youth being delighted at this lenient sentence bowed his forehead to the earth, and, moreover, I must tell you, kept his promise, although he was three days learning the task. Such being the spirit of the laws, and the paternal mildness with which they are for the most part carried out, excepting only in cases of high treason, we need not wonder that this great population has submitted to their rule for four thousand years.

When this case was over the chief of the yah-yu bowed to the ground and charged his prisoners generally with rioting to the disturbance of the public peace.

"What has the priest of Fo to say to this disgraceful charge? let him open his lips," said the mandarin. Whereupon the bonze fell upon his knees and accused the innkeeper of attacking the idol and leading a mob to destroy the monastery.

"What sayest the innkeeper? for surely the offence is serious," said the mandarin.

Then, bowing to the ground, the innkeeper related the morning's adventure, stating that but for the assistance of Nicholas and Chow, the bonze would have killed him, adding, "Truly, O jewel of justice, thy mean servant demands the punishment of this rascal bonze and his trumpery god, who, notwithstanding the sums paid to them, have permitted his only child to be carried from this life."

Having listened patiently to both sides, the mandarin said, "It is true that two offences have been committed, the one against the public peace, and the other against a private person. The former, being the most heinous, must be first dealt with; and, as without the bonze and the innkeeper, there could have been no such disturbance, let both be corrected with twenty blows. As for the two youths, who were drawn into this disturbance, let them pay half a tael each to some poor person to receive ten blows for them."

The sentence having gone forth, the men with the

bamboos caught hold of the culprits, threw them upon the floor, and they received a similar punishment to that dealt out by a schoolmaster upon a refractory pupil; after which, the delinquents, smarting with pain, humbly returned thanks for this benevo lent and fatherly correction.

"As for the second offence said the mandarin, "it is clear that the bonze is either a rogue or no good judge of the powers of the different gods, and knew not to which to apply for this particular favor, an ignorance that has caused the innkeeper to lose his goods; and, in either case, is unfit for his office; therefore, if he is found within the city walls after this night, he shall be placed in the cangue for three moons. As for the god himself, who is the principal party concerned, let him be plucked down from his seat as a useless and malicious deity."

Thus compelled, by custom, to recognize the foolish superstition of Fo, although he no more believed in it than you do, the mandarin humorously punished the bonze.

The wily priest, however, had not quite played out his game, so, dissembling his rage at the result of the trial, he fell upon his knees, saying, "Pardon, O ever-flowing stream of justice, but the meanest and most insignificant servant of Fo, dares claim a reward for a great act."

"What words are these, thou dog of a bonze?" said the angry official.

"If the eyeballs of thy contemptible servant are straight in their sockets, he has seen placards bearing

the character of the illustrious tsong-tou (viceroy) of the province promising twenty taels for any follower of the Christian priests, whose houses of prayer had been so wisely destroyed.

"What useless words are these, for where in this city is such a dog to be found, since they were hunted down by the illustrious governor? may he live a thousand years," replied the mandarin.

This was a terrible surprise for Nicholas, for not only did it convince him that the persecution of the Christians had commenced, but that his own mission had somehow been discovered by the priest; nor was he disappointed when the latter said, "Truly, O grand canal of justice, that turbulent youth is even now on a treasonable errand to the Christian priest, Adam, who has so traitorously fled the city."

"These are dog's words, thou rogue of a bonze," said the boy.

Not regarding the interruption, the priest added, as he placed a paper in the hand of the mandarin, "The dragon vision of the lord of justice will discover to him that his servant's words are pearls of truth."

Having glanced at the paper, the mandarin said sternly to Nicholas, "Thou art young to be concerned in treason, and yet these characters warn the priest, Adam, against the great Ching-Ti, whom the anonymous writer tells him is about to arrive at Hang-tcheou specially charged by the Son of Heaven to root out the Christian priests."

"As this is the first time, O mandarin, that thy

servant's ears drink in this intelligence he must have been innocent of the contents of that packet," replied Nicholas.

"The youth is young; but, like the body of a snake, his words are twirling and slippery. It is true, those characters may not have reached his eyes, but it is equally true that he was the bearer, for the cover is even now in his girdle," said the priest.

"Thy servant, O mandarin, cannot deny that he bore the letter, but it was in ignorance that it was a crime," said Nicholas, taking the envelope from his vest, now fully convinced that the bonze had picked his girdle.

"Although it is certain that the writer is a traitor, it is not equally so that this youth is an accomplice," said the mandarin, after examining the envelope.

"The dog is a Christian, O lord of justice; and in the name of the Son of Heaven, I claim the twenty taels," said the bonze, forgetting the submission due to a magistrate, in his rage and fear that Nicholas might escape.

"Thy words are dirt, thou turbulent rogue, for it is not clear that the youth is a Christian," said the angry mandarin, adding kindly to Nicholas, "Let the youth deny this charge and he shall be believed, for his words are straight as the flying arrow."

Here was a chance, for it was evident the mandarin was his friend. Still, notwithstanding that

imprisonment for life, if not speedy death, stared him in the face, Nicholas was too brave to forswear his Saviour, and he replied, "If to be a Christian, O mandarin, is to merit death, then am I ready to die."

Then the good-natured, but disappointed magistrate said sorrowfully, "The youth is as brave as he is honest, and deserves a better fate; yet must the commands of the great tsong-tou be observed, therefore let the youth be conveyed to the great prison to await his sentence. Without a word or the movement of a muscle, the boy permitted the attendants to bind his arms.

This was too much for Chow, who, with a leap like that of a wounded hare, cried, "The priest, O great lord, is a midnight thief." But such a demonstration being against the rules of decency, the officers seized and silenced the boy by clapping a gag in his mouth. Then the mandarin ordered twenty taels to be given to the bonze, and the latter having made the customary bow was about to depart, when the magistrate said, "Now priest, relate by what means that letter came into thy possession, for it is a maxim that justice should be equally balanced."

Then the bonze related how he met the boys, and took them to the monastery, adding that as they were passing through a passage the letter having fallen from the youth's girdle, he picked it up, and divining that its contents were treasonous, retained the document for examination.

"These are dog's words," exclaimed Chow, from

whose mouth the gag had been taken by the mandarin's order; "the priest is a rogue and a rat, for he stole the paper at night while my noble master slept, and although for hours thy servant believed it was a dream, and mistook the bonze for an enemy, he now remembers that after filching the letter from the girdle, the rogue opened the envelope, stole the contents, and then by some mysterious means of his own closed it again."

The bonze being about to reply, the mandarin interrupted him, saying, "Truly has it been said that although eggs are close things, the chicks will out, for the rogue forgot to explain how the letter could leave the pocket of its owner without the envelope. The theft is clear, and it is but justice to the state that the thief should receive fifty blows, and pay twenty taels of silver." This sentence was speedily executed upon the roaring coward, whose back was still sore with the first beating, and so he left the tribunal considerably worse off than he had come before it.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHOW SETS OUT TO DISCOVER SOME THIEVES.

It was with no little distress of mind that Chow, who now loved Nicholas as a brother, parted with him at the gates of the prison. He tore his hair, beat his breast, and roared and capered as if in bodily as well as mental agony. Never should he see his noble master again; the wicked viceroy would kill him. O that he had not been a Christian, or so unwise as to admit it! These, and many other foolish things, passed through his mind, till he became wearied and fatigued. When more calm, he began to upbraid himself with folly and cowardice for giving way to useless grief instead of setting his wits to work to aid him.

Like most Chinese, Chow believed, or at least followed, the mongrel creed of the country, and he proposed to himself to seek the aid of the gods; although even his faith in their powers had become weakened by the exhibition of the morning; at length, however, it occurred to him to seek the innkeeper, who being well to do, and an old inhabitant of Hang-tcheou, could if willing, give material assistance; if not willing, thought Chow, he must be the most ungrateful of human beings. So he went off to

Sing, who was not only glad to see him, but invited him to live at the inn until they could hit upon some good scheme to rescue Nicholas; and so, that night, they talked and talked the matter over, till, becoming tired, they went to bed to sleep on it.

The next morning they compared notes as to their sleeping thoughts. The result of Chow's was to get a mob together to burst open the prison gates; at which very wise suggestion Sing laughed loudly, greatly to the disgust of Chow, who became very angry, as he fancied the innkeeper doubted his courage; but when Sing explained a little plan of his own he capered about joyfully, and begged that they might commence immediately.

"Let us first ask the gods for a fortunate day," said Sing.

"Then will not the worthy Sing seek a temple at once?" said Chow.

This being agreed to, they started off to the suburbs, where, in a retired spot, near the great lake, they found a divining temple.

These temples, which are sprinkled through the country, are always open for the convenience of the people, who enter upon nothing of importance, whether it be marrying, burying, buying, selling, house-building, party-giving, or setting out upon a journey, without first seeking to discover in the cup of destiny a fortunate day or hour for the proposed undertaking.

Upon the altar stood a large wooden cup, filled with small sticks, marked with certain mystic characters, representing both good and ill luck. Taking

up this cup, Sing began to give it sharp quick jerks, while Chow, taking hold of a book that was hanging to the wall, searched for marks to correspond with those upon the sticks which might be thrown to the ground by Sing's jerking. With serious countenances they went through this performance, Sing believing that by a peculiar scientific twist of his wrist he could jerk out a few sticks of luck. For some time, however, the sticks were obstinate, and would not move; then a sharper jerk and one jumped out, then another, and another, three in all; and Chow, having examined the luck spots very earnestly, groaned with despair, for neither bore the required mark. Then, to propitiate the god of wood, paint, and gold leaf, they burned incense and tinsel paper, and, by way of reaching the cupidity of the deity, for it is difficult to made a Chinese believe that even a god will "do something for nothing," they placed some copper coins upon the altar, enough, I suppose, to satisfy his greedy godship; for when, at the risk of spraining his wrist, Sing gave the next jerk, out jumped two of the lucky spotted sticks, and the oblique eyes of Chow began to smile so satisfactorily that there really appeared to be some danger of their meeting across his nose and melting into one big orb in the middle of his forehead. Holding the sticks above his head, the boy capered about with delight, crying, "Thanks to Tien, the day will be fortunate, for the god has promised, and there is no rogue of a bonze present to persuade him from his good intentions."

As for Sing, he was no less pleased, for, notwith-

standing his previous experience, his faith was entire in the cup of destiny, as it was, indeed, in the gods.

Chow's delight was almost as great as if his master had been already rescued. However, as soon as the first ebullition had subsided he began to think how he should commence operations, and so, puzzling his brains, he walked by the side of Sing, who was also quietly endeavoring to think out some grand plan of proceeding. Thus they proceeded till they came near the walls of the city, when their attention was aroused by a terrible discord. Not a dozen yards from them was a small house (like all Chinese habitations, one story high), before which stood the wall of respect, so called, because like a brick curtain it hides the domicile from the gaze of strangers. Near the doorway stood an elderly man with two pieces of metal, which he kept clanging against each other, stopping only at intervals to fulminate at the very compass of his voice, many fearful curses and maledictions against thieves who had plundered his house, fully believing that by the agency of the gods these curses would reach and crush the thieves, wherever they might be.

"It is only old Hoang, the retired innkeeper," said Sing cooly, as if not at all regretting the misfortunes of his successful rival. He could not, however, have possessed any such paltry feeling, for he added, "Will the venerable Hoang permit his younger brother to assist him in discovering these rogues?"

"The offer of the worthy Sing is good and grateful

to his mean brother, but alas! nothing can avail old Hoang, for the Fong-Choui is his enemy, and will not be satisfied till his house is destroyed," was the reply.

To explain what I must tell you, that it is one of the most remarkable and foolish beliefs of the Celestials, that, apart from sanitary reasons, the situation of a house may effect the happiness and fortunes not only of its owner, but his descendants for several generations. The demon who exercises this baneful influence is the Fong-Choui, or wind and water. Thus, if a neighbor (it had been Hoang's case) builds his house in a contrary direction and so that one of its corners is placed opposite your own, your destiny is fixed, your only remedy being to have it immediately pulled down. To obtain the removal of the house in question, Hoang had applied to the mandarin, but as that officer had received a larger bribe from the neighbor than he could afford, the official recommended the old man to pull down his own house; but as this would have ruined him, he had had recourse to the only other remedy, which was, to erect upon the roof of his house a monster with a dragon's head and a large forked tongue, so pointed at the unfortunate corner that it would frighten away the Fong-Choui. That wind and watery personage, however, was not so easily frightened, for the next day some thieves entered his house and effected a very clever robbery.

By the aid of a mysterious engine (known, I suppose, only to the thieves of China), which will burn great holes in the thickest wood without causing either scent or flame, the rogues had entered Hoang's

dwelling in the night so quietly that when the old gentleman awoke in the morning he found his bed without curtains or coverlid, and the room without furniture, all of which, besides other things of value, had been taken from the house.

"Surely thy dogs of servants must have been accomplices," said Chow.

"Not so, youth, for although I slept deep into the day, when I arose the servants were all in such a deep slumber that I believed them in the sleep of death."

"Surely my elder brother will seek the mandarin, and have the dogs' heads searched for," said Sing.

"Alas! O worthy Sing, thy unhappy servant is under the baneful influence of the Fong-Choui, and the mandarin dares not interfere."

Feeling deeply for the poor man, and not liking the idea of the thieves escaping so easily, Chow asked, "Has the worthy and honorable Hoang sought the mandarin?"

"It would be useless, youth, without, indeed, a stranger would interfere, and break the charm of the Fong-Choui."

"With the will of the venerable Hoang, his younger brother will seek the tribunal of police," said Chow.

Delighted with the offer, Hoang led them through the rooms of his house, which Chow examined with the talent of a detective police officer, and after pacing about for some time he stumbled. Looking to see the cause, he saw it was a small square box. "See," he said, "the robbers in their flight have dropped some of their plunder."

"Surely that box must belong to the villains, for it has never before darkened my eyes," said Hoang.

"Then by the toe of the Son of Heaven we have some clue to the way in which the robbery was effected," said Chow, as he opened the box and took out a little pyramid, resembling our own pastiles. Placing one to his nose he said, "It is the baneful drug of Setchuen. Light but one and place it near the nostrils of a sleeper, and it will be many hours before he can be awakened. In this manner, O venerable friend, has the house been robbed,—its inmates were under the influence of the drug."

"Thy discovery is great, and may lead to the capture of the thieves. Would that so poor a man could reward such a benafactor."

However, as time was an object to Chow for the success of some plan, which from the cunning brightness that flitted through his eye seemed just then to have crossed his mind, he stopped the garrulous gratitude of the old gentleman by begging the box of pastiles as his reward. This being granted, he took a very formal leave, promising not to rest till he had seen the mandarin himself.

CHAPTER IX.

CHOW OUTWITS A GREAT MANDARIN, AND SETS OUT TO RESCUE HIS MASTER.

As they walked to the inn Chow explained to Sing his plan for the rescue of Nicholas, which, after some serious consideration and many words of advice, the innkeeper approved; but as it could not be put in operation before evening, as soon as they reached the inn they went into one of the inner apartments, and while they refreshed themselves with a good meal, chatted over the details.

After they had completed their arrangements, Sing led Chow to an outbuilding, in which were two oblong coffins, the one sealed down, the other with the lid half off. The first contained the body of Sing's daughter, of whom he had been so fond in life that in death he kept her in the same room with the open coffin which had been presented to him by the girl as a filial offering.

Such gifts as this, which I dare say you will think a sombre one, are by no means more rare among the Chinese than the preservation in their own houses of the bodies of those they have loved. And just above an altar upon which incense was burning, hung a portrait of the dead girl, before which silently and

with cheeks damped with tears of memory, Sing threw himself reverentially, and prayed fervently for the other world happiness of his child. Having, with as much real sympathy as mere courtesy, joined in the ceremony for a short time, Chow arose, and left the bereaved parent throwing cuttings of silver paper upon the burning dish, in the belief that in the next world it would change into real money for his daughter's use.

As when Chow reached the police tribunal he found it closed for the day, he clattered upon a large gong or kettle drum, affixed to the door, a piece of great daring on his part; for if his business did not strike the mandarin as being of the greatest importance, he might make sure of some fifty blows for his impudence, for the public officers in China are quite as averse to doing too much for the public money as many that I could name of our own.

The door was opened and the boy was shown into the hall of audience, where he had not long to wait before the mandarin and four bamboo sticks in waiting made their appearance. "How, dog! Why this clatter at our gates when the tribunal is closed?" asked the surly grandee.

"Will the magnificent fountain of justice give his unworthy servant a private hearing?" said the bold boy, glancing significantly at the bamboo sticks in waiting.

"Let the fellow's mouth be opened with ten blows for his impudence," said the polite magistrate; but as the men were about to obey, Chow thrust his hand

into his robe, and pulling out a letter threw it into the great man's lap, a piece of effrontery so beyond all precedent that the bamboo sticks in waiting stood aghast and ready at a glance from the mandarin to immolate the profane boy. The magistrate, however, no sooner opened the paper than in tremulous tones he exclaimed, "Leave us alone, this fellow has matters of private importance to communicate."

This order having been obeyed, Chow broke through the rules of decency and etiquette by speaking before he was spoken to. "A crime has been committed within thy district, O mandarin, yet justice sleeps. Surely this is not according to the sacred books," said he.

"What dog's words are these? of what crime speaks the youth?" said the magistrate mildly.

"According to the sacred books, O mandarin, it is the magistrate's duty to discover and punish crime within his district. Yet notwithstanding the house of the retired innkeeper Hoang is in a well-guarded quarter of the city, it has been broken into and its furniture and valuables stolen; moreover, what is more surprising in so populous a district, the thieves have escaped."

"What words are these?" said the mandarin again, being in fact so troubled that he knew not what to say.

"Truly, it is a shrewd maxim, 'that large fowls will not eat small grain,' yet, the largest may be choked if too greedy, for there are still larger birds to swallow them; in turn even thou mayst be stripped

of thy rank and offices, if not strangled," said Chow, adding, "Would the lord of justice wish straighter words?"

The words proved straight enough to go direct to the mark, for the mandarin fell upon his knees and begged Chow to accept half his fortune, and although it would be letting his rogue off cheaply enough, the rescue of Nicholas was his object, and he promised to forego using his knowledge of the great man's delinquency, providing that he would give him an order under the official seal that would admit him to his master's prison. Rejoiced to purchase his safety so easily, the mandarin not only gave the order, but also promised to see that Hoang's property was restored to him within a few days. After this Chow gave a paper to the magistrate, and left the tribunal well satisfied with the result of his visit.

Now, as I dare say you are anxious to know how it came about that so poor a boy could have such power over so great a personage, I will tell you, and you will obtain some little knowledge how public affairs are managed in China, and moreover, learn that dishonesty may sometimes place the greatest official beneath the thumb of the smallest of persons, as indeed it happened in this case.

When Chow was chattering over his plans with the innkeeper he examined the box of pastiles, and on taking them out, discovered a paper at the bottom, evidently placed there for security, as the thieves could not have dreamt of leaving their most valuable implements behind. That paper was an order for four

men, whose names were mentioned, to pass to the boats on the canal, with any quantity of goods, without questioning, and was signed with the character of the mandarin, which accounted for the thieves getting off with so many things, but it also proved that the mandarin was in connivance with them, and was in the habit of granting these passes to robbers in return for a large bribe. Now, as Chow could write very well, he immediately composed a letter to the mandarin, telling him the whole transaction, and, moreover, that the thieves were well known to a friend of his, who, if he did not return by a certain time that evening, would disclose the whole matter to the viceroy; therefore it was not to be wondered that the great man trembled and implored of Chow to accept half his fortune, for had it been brought before the viceroy he would, as Chow more than hinted, in all probability have been strangled.

CHAPTER X.

ESCAPE OF NICHOLAS FROM PRISON.

HAVING, at the same time, secured an order for admittance to Nicholas and the restitution of old Hoang's property, Chow went in search of a shop, where he purchased a rope of silk, and returned to the prison, which was next to the tribunal.

At that time far in advance, and even now not much worse than our own, the prisons of China are large and spacious, and although some of the most criminal of the inmates are loaded with chains, the greater number are permitted to take exercise and converse with each other in an open court during the day. Their health is cared for,—if any are ill a physician attends them, and when a death takes place a report is sent to the Emperor, who issues orders for an examination, something like our inquests, into the cause, when should it appear that any of the officers are at fault, they are immediately degraded and punished. When a prisoner dies the body is not permitted to pass through the ordinary doorway, but through an opening reserved for the purpose. It is seldom, however, that deaths occur in these places, for should a person, especially above the lowest rank in life, be in danger, he or his friends pray that he may be taken without the walls to expire; indeed, so infamous is it consid-

ered for a corpse to be taken through this dead opening, that "May he be dragged through the prison hole" is the greatest expression of evil a person can wish his enemy.

The prison in which Nicholas was confined was a large building, with its front to the street and its back to the canal. There were three courts, each having treble gates, well guarded by armed sentries. Chow found no difficulty in passing the first two gates, but the third was under the charge of the chief gaoler, who not only made him show the mandarin's order, but ordered two soldiers to accompany the boy to his master's cell, which was situated at the top of one of the four corners or towers, and overlooking the canal.

The armed men he met at every turn, and the dismal-looking strength of the halls, courts, doors, and staircases through which he passed, made Chow feel very wretched, for not an atom of a chance could he see for a prisoner to escape. However no sooner did he again get sight of Nicholas than all difficulties vanished, his countenance brightened, and the affectionate fellow fell at his feet and wept with joy.

"How is this? surely thou art not a Christian, my poor friend, that they should bring thee here?" said Nicholas sorrowfully.

"Truly both servant and master are fortunate, for the mandarin has permitted them to keep each other company."

For some minutes Chow squatted upon the floor with his head bent to the ground, apparently in grief

at his master's position. Really, he had not calculated upon the presence of the two gaolers; it was an awkward dilemma, still he was not one to stick at a difficulty, and so he began to think. His were not pleasant thoughts, for it was just possible that the mandarin on recovering from his fright might tremble at the probable consequences of permitting the escape of Nicholas, and to make his own peace confess the whole affair to the Christian-hating viceroy.

Having finished cogitating, Chow commenced a lively conversation with Nicholas about any thing and every thing but what was most on his mind; then he endeavored to chat with the surly gaolers; the attempt, however, proved a failure, till he brought forth a porcelain bottle filled with rice spirit. When the men grew better tempered, Chow said, "Is there any law that will prevent the honorable guard from bestowing upon his servants some hot tea, for surely it will refresh them?" Without making any reply, one of the gaolers opened the door and called aloud for the beverage.

Some minutes after swallowing the tea, Chow rolled over upon the floor, and howled like a dog; which extraordinary proceeding so alarmed Nicholas and the men, that one of the latter, throwing down his weapon, fell upon his knees and began to rub the sufferer's stomach. "Will the ungrateful villains let me die the dog's death for the want of a cup of water?" Surprised as they were at such a remedy, the frightened men provided the water, but at the same time pointed to the porcelain flask.

For the hint the patient thanked them, but he knew it would be of no use without hot water. Would the honorable gaolers get some?

That was another affair, for to ask for hot water would be to proclaim that rice spirit was being drunk in the prison, when gaolers as well as prisoners would be bambooed.

Then, having coaxed and importuned for some time fruitlessly, Chow held his hand upon his stomach, and alarmed Nicholas with performing a long series of tragic-comic grimaces and contortions, when seeing the men begin to tremble at the heavy punishment that awaited them if a prisoner died beneath their charge, he said, "Surely the noble guardians would not have it proclaimed to the next visiting mandarin that they have been drinking the prohibited spirit."

Perceiving now that they were upon the horns of a dilemma, the gaolers hesitated. Then a bright thought came to one, and he said, "Truly, the tea is cold; a fire-pan will warm it; and so it will not be suspected that rice spirit has been brought into the prison." Thus settling the matter to his satisfaction, the man procured a small dish of fire and a cup of cold water, when Chow had another attack, and in his paroxysms kicked over his tea-cup, and then very inconsistently clamored for cold water. This request being complied with, the patient sipped and appeared a degree better, for he then stood upon his feet and thanked his deliverers, and, moreover, offered them some more spirit, an offence which was repeated and accepted till both gaolers became very good-humored

and talkative, first to Chow, then to Nicholas. Finding that they were busy with the latter, Chow sauntered up to the fire and sat before it, as if to prevent another attack by its heat. Then a sweet perfume pervaded the atmosphere, and so gradually increased in strength, that, imperceptibly to themselves, the tongues of the men slackened by degrees, their loud tones softened into silence, their heads waved gently to and fro, till, overcome by the density of the air, they fell sideways upon the ground. It was not far to fall, for they had been squatting upon the floor during their jovial conversation. Then taking a large sponge that he had been holding to his own nostrils, Chow held it to the nose of Nicholas, who, not being intoxicated with spirit, soon exhibited signs of returning animation, when creeping up to the drooping gaolers, he passed something, not a sponge, near to their nostrils, which seemed to have the effect of double locking their senses. Then leading the half-insensible Nicholas to the window, he took a knife from his girdle and cut away the painted paper panes, when the cold air soon made the master as sensible as the servant.

Arresting by a sign, Nicholas's exclamations of surprise at these proceedings, Chow pulled forth the silken cord, fastened one end to the table, then tying his knife to the other end he let it gently down, and hung out of the window with it in his hand, as if he had been fishing. In a few minutes he obtained a bite, for the rope gave a jerk. This being satisfactory, he whispered to his master to descend by the loops.

Nicholas complied, and in one minute found himself in the arms of some person, and in another, carried into a small room, about large enough to hold four men. A minute more, Chow entered the cabin, the boat began to glide along the canal, and Nicholas comprehended the whole of Chow's scheme. Now you have the reason of his delight in seizing upon the box of pastiles, two of which he had managed to light while his back was turned to the gaolers. The cold water Chow knew to be an antidote to the stupifying effects of the perfume, if applied immediately, as in the case of Nicholas. As for the boy's illness, that was a ruse, and a very good one too, under the circumstances.

CHAPTER XI.

PURSUED BY THE YAH-YU.—THE BOAT WRECK.

When the boat had run a sufficient distance from the prison, Sing, for he it was who had so ably aided in the escape, putting a pole in the hands of Nicholas, and taking one himself, they forced the little craft along the waters with the greatest possible speed. As for Chow, not finding another pole, and resolved not to be left out of the good work, he took off his boots, threw his legs over the stern, and helped to propel the boat by paddling against the water with his feet. By these means, in a very short time, they arrived at the back of Sing's house, which fortunately faced the canal. It was thus, indeed, that the inn-keeper had been enabled to pass to the prison in the little san-pan which he had borrowed from a friendly boatman.

Going into the house to caution his wife against feeling alarmed at his probably prolonged absence, he left them for a few minutes, and when he returned they had no small cause to rejoice at his thoughtfulness, for his wife had just heard from one of the prison attendants, who lived at the inn, that about half an hour after their escape the relief guard of gaolers had discovered their absence, and sent a body of yah-yu, both by land and water, to recapture them.

By the toe of the Emperor, the villain god has deceived me, for he promised a fortunate day," said Chow.

"It is thy head and heart, and not the foolish images, that have hitherto helped thee, Chow. We will now trust to the same aids, and by the assistance of the One true God, these rogues shall not overtake us," said Nicholas.

"The noble youth is brave, but he may not perform impossibilities," replied Sing.

"Truly it is not far to the river," said Nicholas.

"The river!" exclaimed Sing, with affright. "Truly Fo himself could not make a boat live upon the river such a night as this, at the full of the moon."

"It is our only safety, for these rascal yah-yu dare not follow," said Nicholas, who regarded the great and dangerous waters of the river as his native element, adding, "If thou, Chow, but show a brave heart."

"Truly, my master, Chow fears not men, but surely it would be a vile thing to anger the god of the waters, who may this night swallow all who dare to pass from the estuary."

"Art thou an idiot, that after the exhibition at the monastery, the folly of these toy gods of the bonzes is not imprinted upon thine eyeballs?" said Nicholas, adding angrily, "But if thou fearest, hide thee with the good Sing, and thy master will brave the torrents alone."

"This thing may not be, O noble Nicholas, for

rather than leave thee, thy servant would be a hundred times swallowed by Yen-Vang himself," said Chow.

"Thou art brave, youth, and may it please Fo to conduct thee safely to thy journey's end," said Sing, adding with alarm, "But see, yonder is the boat of the yah-yu, for surely no other would be in motion at this hour of the night."

"Then," said Nicholas, looking at a red light which appeared to be fixed at the prow of a moving boat, "we must labor for our lives, Chow.

Then taking a silent but hearty farewell of the innkeeper, the youths clutched the poles and in another minute they were gliding along the water street unheeded, except by the watchmen, whose questions they answered with a few copper coins, and they pushed on through the dark night, till nearly worn out with the exertion. The fact, however, that they were toiling for their lives, lent them additional strength, so after a short rest, away they went again in right good earnest; then the hum of distant voices floated through the night air. Resting for a moment Chow placed his ear near to the water, saying, "Truly they are following us, but more, my master, we are near the great dike, which it would be as easy to pass as to swallow a mountain."

"Courage, O Chow, let us pass the dike, and the rats will never overtake us," said Nicholas, toiling harder than ever at the pole.

This dike or sluice divided from the canal the waters of the river which Nicholas had been so anxious to

reach, but as Chow knew they could not get the boat hauled over by Coolies at that hour of the night, he could perceive nought but a barrier that by arresting their progress, must put them in the hands of their enemies; still not liking to disobey, he toiled at his pole, and speedily the boat came alongside some twenty others, which had arrived too late to be hauled over that night.

Nicholas, however, knowing the influence of money, determined to get over the difficulty. So fetching the lantern from the cabin, he so shaded its light with his robe, that while it could not be seen by their pursuers, he could see moored some distance from them a little fleet of san-pans. This he had expected, so gently pushing the boat alongside one of them he tapped upon the egg-like roof, and in another minute a man put out his head, when putting a piece of silver in his hand, as an earnest of a greater reward, the boatman acquiesced, and in a few minutes more he had aroused some of his fellows, who very nimbly set about mooring their boats till they had drawn them across the canal, so as to form a barricade, in the event of the enemy making its appearance; after which the boatman fastened a stout rope around the stern of the boys' boat, got into his own, and cautioning them to hold on by the roof of the cabin, with the assistance of some dozen of his mates in their boats, forced the little craft to the summit of the stone slope, when all clinging to the rope, let her slide gently down the other side into the river, when silently the san-pans moved back to their moorings, so that

upon their arrival at the dike the yah-yu must have been strangely puzzled at the boy's escape from their clutches.

The dangers of the river, however, were far greater than Nicholas had calculated, for the great stream upon whose bosom they had embarked, was at times as tempestuous as the ocean, and they possessed neither oars nor sails; as for the poles, the great depth of the river rendered them useless. Again, the night was so dark, that except by the feeble light of their lantern they could not see each other's faces; their only consolation was, that the waters were then as smooth and tranquil as those of the canal, except that a rapid current seemed to be sweeping them along without an effort of their own.

"May the great god Fo protect us against Matsoo-po, to whom we can offer no incense," said Chow.

"How! Can it be that one so brave on land should be so great a coward upon water?" said Nicholas.

"Truly it is a maxim, my master that, 'all are cowards who can't help themselves.' Chow in the waters would be less than the least of little fishes, for he cannot swim," was the gloomy reply.

"It is also a maxim, 'that the gods forsake those who forsake themselves,'" said Nicholas, adding, "But it is fatigue, my poor Chow, that destroys thy courage; get thee, therefore, into the cabin and rest for a time, while I keep watch."

"Nay, Fo protect us, or we are food for the favorites of the god of the waters," replied Chow, as the

boat at that moment made a tremulous movement, which so alarmed Nicholas, that clutching hold of Chow's arm, he said, "Now put forth all thy energies or we are lost, for the 'bore' is upon us."

This was sufficient, for in the presence of real danger Chow soon drove away the troubled fancies of his brain.

"The poles are our only chance," said Nicholas, and, quickly as thought, they fastened their poles to the sides, so that they stretched out like two great arms. "Let us but keep our whole weight steadily upon the handles, and we may keep her course straight," said Nicholas; and no sooner had they thrown themselves across the poles than a noise like that of distant thunder rumbled through the air; it was the great tide wave rolling like a mountain toward them. Now they could not escape; so, commending their souls to Heaven, they awaited its approach with suspended breath. It came, and, with a roar, caught up the boat, carrying it to a height of fifty feet; in another second the boys were covered with a cold sweat at the narrowness of their escape, which had been owing to their precaution. Then followed a calm, as if the anger of the watery element had subsided. The boys slackened their hold of the poles, and so they continued for two hours, going they knew not whither. Suddenly the boat began to rock.

"To your pole, Chow," cried Nicholas. No sooner had he complied, than they found they had entered upon a rapid, for the little craft shot forth almost

with the velocity of an arrow. Then came the first faint streaks of daybreak, and they trembled, for they saw that they had entered a narrow creek. "Steady, for our lives, there is hope yet, for yonder vessel may see us," said Nicholas. The vessel to which he alluded was a large junk, so skilfully handled that she seemed to be stemming the torrent. Gaining hope, the boys clung to their only chance, namely, keeping the poles in their fixed positions. Another half hour, however, and their strength became exhausted, the poles quivered, the boys felt they could not hold out much longer; still another determined effort; their minds lent strength to their limbs. Then the first light of the sun, an eastern sun, shone upon the junk, and disclosed a huge painted eye (the government emblem), at the sight of which, and screaming aloud "The yah-yu!" Chow let go his hold, fell backward, and one pole being thus released, the boat lost its equilibrium, the pole of Nicholas snapped, and she swang round like a Catherine wheel. They were in a whirlpool—nothing could save them —then came a fearful crash, and neither Chow nor Nicholas could distinguish more.

CHAPTER XII.

NICHOLAS AGAIN TAKEN PRISONER.

With the wild whirling of the waters ringing in his ears, and the great painted eye before his vision, Nicholas stared around. Where could he be? He was lying upon a mat, in a small low room; he sat up, endeavored to comprehend his position, and the san-pan, the bore, the torrent, the whirlpool, all flashed across him—but where could he be? There before him stood a copper god, hideously grinning at a pan of burning incense. Surely it must be the cabin of a junk—but what?—whose? Possibly the yah-yu's. It must be so; and, brave as he was, he shuddered. Then, looking out of the window, he could see nothing but a vast extent of paddy (rice in the husks) fields. Then he saw the junk was passing along a canal, which, from its width, he knew must be the great Imperial Canal. Then Chow—poor Chow—and as he believed him to have been swallowed up in the waters, the gallant boy burst into tears; and this great grief banished every selfish thought from his mind. Then he trembled for the safety of his letters; but, feeling beneath his robe, he found them secure. Again he wept for Chow, and, happening to look at the god, the hideous little brute seemed to be rejoic-

ing at his troubles, and in momentary rage he knocked the deity off its perch with his fist, with such violence that the pain and blood upon his lacerated knuckles immediately reminded him of the stupidity of the act, and he laughed at his folly; but reflecting that the captain of the vessel might visit such an insult to the image upon himself he replaced it in its original position.

At that moment the door opened, and Chow entered with a tray, upon which were two cups, a jar, and other materials for a meal, and in his surprise exclaiming "Chow!" the latter was so much startled that he nearly dropped the tray.

"May Tien be thanked; my master is far from Yen-Vang."

"Where are we, O Chow?" said Nicholas, recovering from his surprise; but the boy would answer no questions until Nicholas had partaken of the meal.

As soon as by eating and drinking, he had satisfied Chow that he was really alive, the latter said, "Truly the gods must have been favorably disposed toward the noble Nicholas, to have kept him alive for so many days and nights, without brains in his head or food in his mouth."

"What words are these, O Chow?" said Nicholas, placing his hand to his forehead, as if making an effort to decipher the boy's meaning.

"Let my master open his ears," said Chow; adding, "Worn out with my exertions in the boat, I no sooner perceived the terrible eye than I loosened

my hold of the pole, and either from fright or fatigue, became insensible; the water, however, revived me, and looking for my master, I saw him lying by my side upon a shelving edge of rock, for, thanks be to Fo, we had dashed upon the rock, the servant without harm, but the master receiving such a blow that it deprived him of his senses; when, alarmed for his life, I shouted to the crew of the junk for help, and begged of them to take us on board, but the rats refused, saying, that as the gods had evidently reserved us for drowning, to resist would be to provoke Ma-tsoo-po. Then, as my only hope, I shouted to them that I had secured a traitor for whose head fifty taels were offered."

"Surely thou art not a rogue." But not noticing this, Chow continued, "The hope of so much silver made the rogues carry us on board, and then poor Chow could have swallowed fire, for when he begged of them to use means to recall thee to thy senses, the dog of a captain said, 'Know thou rat of a boy, that if fifty taels are offered for the rascal's head, it will save trouble to lop it off at once.' Then Fo sent a thought into my brainless head, and falling at the captain's feet, I told him that so great were thy crimes, that although fifty taels would be given for thy head, five hundred and a mandarin's button would be given for thy whole body.

"Then said the captain, 'the dog utters words of wisdom,' and fearing to lose the silver, if you died, he commanded a physician who happened to be on board to make thee sound and whole, and moreover,

promised to reward me with ten taels if I helped to bring thee round."

But as they heard approaching footsteps, Chow said softly, "Get thee to thy mat, it is the physician; do not let him bring thee to thy senses, or we are lost."

By the time Nicholas had lain down, an elderly man, with a small funnel and a porcelain cup in his hands, entered the cabin, and with as much meaningless mystery of manner as one of our doctors, knelt by his side and commenced the comical operation of feeling his pulse, or rather pulses, for the physician's hands and fingers traveled up and down the boy's body like a flea in search of a choice bite. Having gone through this performance, he placed the funnel in the patient's mouth, and poured down his throat a decoction of the gen-seng root, a plant which the Chinese believe will cure all ills; and, disagreeable and difficult as it was, Nicholas swallowed it, which so delighted the old gentleman that he left the cabin chuckling, but telling Chow on no account to attempt to awake him for the next three hours, as he was assured that nature was bringing him to by her own means.

"Verily the old cheat believes I have a fever," said Nicholas, jumping up as soon as the doctor had left the cabin.

Chow, who had been gazing from the window of the cabin while the physician was present, no sooner saw him leave than he said, "We shall leave the dogs now;" adding, "Let the noble Nicholas remain sense-

less till Chow returns," and without another word he left the cabin.

For some time Nicholas remained quiet upon the mat, but getting tired he arose, and looking out of the window he saw that the junk was in the middle of the canal, and from the great quantity of boats knew they were near to some great city. He had not, however, been looking long, when to his surprise he saw one of these san-pans come alongside the junk, and taking Chow on board, paddled off to the shore, where he remained for some time, and then was brought back to the junk. What could that mean? Surely Chow was not playing him false. No he was ashamed of the thought. The boy must be concocting some scheme for his benefit; but hearing footsteps he resumed his position upon the mat, and in another minute the physician and Chow entered. This time the doctor only went through the pulse performance, saying, "Now if the rascal would but move a limb it would show that Fo and the immortal drug had sent the blood into his muscles.

A comical notion came into the patient's head; it was dangerous, but it might prevent the necessity of the funnel being put in his throat, and so with a slight yawn he suddenly gave the old gentleman such a kick on the shins that he started with surprise, but delighted that his treatment had succeeded, he said, "Truly the rogue is getting his strength," and hopped out of the room, uttering maledictions upon the sailors for robbing him of his gen-seng.

"What meant the rat by those words?" said

Nicholas, and he was more than satisfied when Chow told him the following story: The doctor placed implicit faith in the wonderful curative powers of the famous gen-seng, a quantity of which he carried about with him, ready for any accident that might happen. Knowing this, Chow had managed to secure the whole, and, as he anticipated, when the old gentleman discovered his loss he grew furious, and told the captain that Nicholas would die. The captain being in fear of losing his reward, had all the men searched, and not a few beaten with the bamboo. It was all of no use. What was to be done? Chow offered to go ashore and procure some; the captain agreed, a signal was made for a boatman, who, as we have seen, came off to the junk, took Chow ashore, from whence he returned with the much-prized plant, which, by the way, he had no greater trouble in obtaining than putting his hand in a hole in the lining of his outer garment.

While in the boat Chow had made good use of his time, for he had bribed the boatman to bring his little craft alongside the junk about the middle of the third watch.

The night is divided into five watches; the first begins at seven and is distinguished by a single stroke, which is repeated every minute till the second watch, when two blows are given, and so with the third, fourth, and fifth.

Anxiously did they await the treble sound; at length it came,—one, two, three,—and they stood with breathless expectation; about the tenth minute

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of the third watch there was a tap at the paper window, when pulling out his knife, Chow ran the blade around the paper, and the next moment the end of a rope was thrown through. Making this fast to a hook within the cabin, Nicholas crept legs foremost through the hole, and catching hold of a rope swang himself into the san-pan. Chow followed, and they crawled into the little cabin, when the san-pan glided away, not, however, without arousing one of the sailors, who believing that the boat had crept alongside with some nefarious design upon the property of the vessel, sharply warned the boatman of the danger of any such attempt, as he was on the *qui vive*. The boatman, however, having given a satisfactory reply, he pushed onward, and after passing through a little world of junks, san-pans, and barges, they managed to effect a landing without being noticed. After which, the man having fastened his boat led them through the suburbs till they reached a small mud hut, from the top of which issued a wreathing column of flame and smoke.

"It is the hut of a sentry," exclaimed Nicholas, who knew that the signal huts were distributed at distances of about a mile apart throughout the interior, as a warning to all would-be depredators that the police were on the alert, and this being precisely the kind of place they should have avoided, he said, "For what purpose has the worthy boatman brought us to this hut."

"Truly, my master, we are in safe hands, for the man on duty is the boatman's brother and will let us

hide here till morning," said Chow, and the next moment they were within the hut partaking of a portion of the soldier's fare of hot tea and rice bread.

After some little time the boatman said, "Truly it is not often that brothers meet, and it is well that we should have a fraternal conversation."

When the men left the hut Chow took a paper from his robe, leant over a fire, and having perused it, said, "The dog is a rogue, he would give us shelter to-night but to betray us in the morning."

"What words are these? Truly the boatman knew us as nought but two poor travelers."

"My master's thoughts are generous," replied Chow; adding, as he handed Nicholas the paper, "Let the noble man-boy read for himself."

Taking the paper, Nicholas read, "Let the noble commander offer a handsome reward, and the rascals who have escaped shall be again placed in his hands."

"Truly this is villainy; but how fell this paper into thy hands, O Chow."

"Is it not a maxim that wickedness defeats its own ends?" said Chow; adding, "As thy servant was getting from the window of the junk into the san-pan, that paper fell into his hand. Doubtless the rascal boatman threw it upon the deck, from whence by accident, it fell into my hands."

"Truly it must have been thrown by the hand of Heaven," said Nicholas.

"We will defeat the rascals, for fortunately I have saved one of the thieves' pastiles," said Chow, pulling one of the pyramids from beneath his robe.

Then as they heard the footsteps of the soldier they squatted before the fire, pretending to be in earnest conversation. The man joined them, and having poured some hot water into a cup, took a pinch of tea-dust from a little packet and made himself a cup of that beverage. But while the soldier was drinking, and probably chuckling at the good round sum he should obtain in the morning for Chow and Nicholas, the latter pulled his arms behind, and held them till Chow tore enough of his coarse loose garment to form a ligature, with which he secured them; then throwing him upon his back, and leaving Nicholas to prevent his rolling over, he pulled from his robe a portable lantern, unfolded it, lit the wick, then lighting the pastile, at arm's length he held it beneath the soldiers's nostrils till he became stupid, and indeed, until he became insensible, when, rolling him over and leaving the pastile burning, they left the hut, taking good care to secure it from the outside.

CHAPTER XIII.

PAGODAS, THEIR ANTIQUITY AND USES.

ALONE, unarmed, in a strange country, at night, and pursued by enemies, the boys stood for a time to consider their next steps. Fortunately, at that moment the moon began to shine more brightly, and they saw at the distance of some few hundred yards the giant form of a pagoda rising from the summit of a hill, with its quaint polygon form, varnished green tiles, and gilded bells hanging from every point.

"Truly the gods have directed our footsteps to a resting-place till the morning," said Chow.

This was indeed a fortunate discovery, for, knowing that most of the pagodas were untenanted, they might hide there; and with lightened hearts they walked onward, till they came to a valley, or cemetery, filled with tombs, and through which they walked till they came to the base of a hill, at the top of which was the entrance to the pagoda. Having reached one of the gates, they found it locked, a difficulty that was soon surmounted by Chow, who cast his lantern toward one of the windows of the lower story, and, as he expected, found that, like the majority of these quaint structures, this one was in ruins; so, by means of the shoulder of Nicholas, he climbed

through a window, and speedily opened the gate, when they found themselves in an apartment lined with black varnished tiles, nearly all of which were carved with gilded idols.

"Thank Heaven, we are safe from the rats," said Nicholas.

"And may sleep, O my master," said the fatigued Chow, laying himself at full length upon the floor, an example that was speedily followed by Nicholas, who, like Chow, notwithstanding the danger that surrounded them, fell into a sound sleep.

These singular, and frequently beautiful buildings, towering upward in various heights upon the rising grounds, like an unequally grown forest of quaint spires, form the chief characteristic in Chinese scenery. As if the builders believed luck to be found in odd numbers, they are either of seven, nine, or thirteen stories, and moreover, all shaped from the model of the famous Tower of Nankin, which, after an existence of nine hundred years, has so recently been wantonly destroyed by the iconoclastic insurgents, who are, at the present time, making every effort for the extermination of the Mantchou Tartars.

As for the origin of these structures, it is of so remote a date, that, even in four thousand years old China, there is as much difference of opinion as about the origin of the round towers of Ireland. Some of the learned writers assert that they were erected monumentally to great and good people, others that they were intended as watch-towers in time of war.

A very probable theory is that they are of Indian

origin, having been introduced by the priests of Bud dha, for the purpose of saving the holy relics, thumbs, fingers, toes, or any other portions of the body of the god that might from time to time be found, or rather palmed upon the superstitious people by the bonzes. By way of illustrating this theory, I will relate to you some of the popular legends. The first is really a wild-goose story.

The primitive Buddhists of India were not under such strict rules of diet as the sect afterward became; that is, not vegetarians, but at liberty to eat veal, venison, and goose flesh. Well, it happened that on a certain day, as a party of priests were seated in the open air, a brace of wild geese flew above them, which caused them to exclaim, "Our wish is that these fowls would do a benevolent act," when one of the birds immediately dropped down dead. Upon which remarkable event, the priests cried, "This goose brings down a prohibition to abstain from flesh; we must therefore consider its meritorious act." Whereupon they erected a building over the poor goose, which they called pagoda, which word, translated from the Indian word, tsang-po, into Chinese, is equivalent to wild goose.

Of this same pagoda, which still exists, another legend is given.

"Nearly six hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism into China, a priest of the sect was sent to India to collect and translate into the Chinese language the sacred books of Budd. On his return with the volumes, he brought also a model of a pagoda;

in commemoration of which, and also as a receptacle for the sacred books, the Emperor erected a pagoda." If this legend is true, and it certainly is more probable than any of the others, it is curious, as during the reign of this same Emperor, in the year 636, a Christian teacher first came from India to China, and was not only encouraged by the Emperor, but was authorised by a royal decree to preach Christianity among the people.

Another legend states that in the year 256 a foreign priest of the Buddhist religion appeared at the capital, and performed many strange and supernatural feats, which, reaching the ears of the Emperor, caused him to send for the priest, of whom he inquired if Buddha could communicate any divine emblems. The priest replied, that Buddha had left some traces of himself on earth, particularly bone relics, which possessed miraculous powers. The Emperor, scarcely believing the story, told the priest that if any such bone could be found, he would erect a great pagoda. To this the story goes on to say, that the priest, twenty-one days after, brought one of the god's bones in a bottle, and presented it to his majesty, and that when taken into the palace, it lighted up the whole building. Then comes the most astonishing portion of the legend. In his haste to inspect this wonderful bone, the Emperor turned it out of the bottle, into a large copper vessel, when the bone, probably a leg bone, of its own accord kicked the massive basin with such violence that it became shivered into a thousand pieces. This, you

would imagine, was in all conscience sufficiently prodigious to weaken his majesty's nerves. The priest, however insisted upon exhibiting another wonder, telling the emperor that so matchless were the qualities of this bone, that diamond or steel could not scratch it, fire could not scorch it, nor the heaviest hammer smash it; indeed, to injure this precious bone in any way would be to perform one of the labors of Hercules. This, however, was too much for the belief of the Emperor, and so he ordered his stoutest blacksmith to take his heaviest hammer and make the attempt; the priest, however got the best of it, for no sooner did the hammer touch the bone than it crumbled into atoms, when, probably, in delight at its success, this clever bone shone with such effulgence that it weakened the eyes of all beholders. After this the monarch wanted no more proof of the godship of Buddha, kept his promise, and built the first pagoda in China.

Most of these legends have a close connection with Buddhism and its priests; it is, therefore, most probable that these pagodas have, from their introduction into China in the middle of the first century of the Christian era, been used in connection with the bonzes. This opinion is entertained by the learned Chinese scholar, the Rev. Mr. Milne, who says, "Among the Chinese themselves it is a common saying, In pagodas they save and preserve the family of Buddha. Usually priests of this order are in charge of the pagoda, and sit at the doors of the most famous and frequented, to receive gratuities from visit-

ors. Pagodas are situated generally on Buddhists' lands, and there are in their vicinity, or around their base, temples or monasteries for Buddhist priests. Within those pagodas that are at all in a state of preservation, Buddhist idols, relics, pictures, and books are deposited. The histories of these buildings throughout the empire, at least the earliest of them, are crammed with Buddhist tales and fictions." So interesting are these extraordinary monuments of antiquity, as being the probable and supposed depositories of Buddhist writings and Indian documents, which, should they ever be brought to light will not only throw a light upon the early intercourse between China and Hindostan, but elucidate the mystery which now hangs over the history of the religion of ancient India, a matter of importance to every intelligent being, that at the risk of being tedious, I could not forbear having a little gossip with my young reader on the subject. But now to return to our young heroes.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DANGEROUS DESCENT.

When Nicholas opened his eyes, he found Chow awake and on the look-out at the aperture by which he had entered the previous evening. He called to him, but the boy's whole attention was evidently too much engaged for him to reply. Surely, thought Nicholas, the enemy must be in close pursuit, and in an instant, he was upon his legs and by the side of Chow, who exclaimed, "The rascals have discovered our retreat, and we are lost after all!"

"Surely thy fears deceive thy eyeballs," said Nicholas; but, looking for himself, he saw coming through the tombs in the direction of the pagoda, not only the soldier and the treacherous boatman, but the captain of the junk.

"The rogues will arouse the bonzes at the monastery," said Chow.

"Truly the rats are not so senseless. They know we are unarmed, and hope to take us without letting the bonzes share the reward; but let us ascend, it is our only chance," said Nicholas, leading the way up a steep staircase to the next story; but, hearing voices beneath, he added, "Let us clamber to the top and lie quiet, when they may perhaps give up the search."

So they ascended the next staircase, but when they came to the third story they were vexed to find the stairs fallen so completely to ruin that they could proceed no higher. Fortune, however, favored them, for looking around they saw a ladder, which had probably been left by the bonze, whose business it was to exhibit the ancient ruin for the convenience of visitors. To ascend was the work of a minute, but before they had reached the uppermost round of the ladder they heard their pursuers enter the lower apartment, when, quickening their movements, they soon reached the seventh story. Now, as like a pyramid, the building diminished in bulk as it increased in height, the top was so small that theycould but just pass through the small aperture into the little room, which, fortunately, was in such a dilapidated state, hat the roof near the central pole or spire, which ran up the interior from the base to the apex, and was surmounted by a kind of large button, was nearly off.

Once in this room, they set about fortifying their position, by pulling up a few of the loose flooring-boards and throwing them over the well hole by which they had entered. It was a happy thought, for as they were laying the last board over the hole, they saw the soldier upon the first round of the top ladder. In a moment they squatted down with their whole weight upon the boards, and as the aperture was so small that but one man could ever attempt to pass through at a time, they were secure.

For at least two hours they remained in that posi-

tion, which proved such a formidable obstacle to the entrance of the man, that tired out, he determined to consult with his companions as to some other means of destroying the boys. Then, leaving Chow upon the boards watching through a hole for the man's next attempt to force their position, Nicholas ascended through a hole in the crumbling roof, looked around for some few minutes, then descending, said, "We will escape from the roof."

"Where are our wings, O, my master? for without them we shall become very small pieces of broken china by the time we reach the bottom," said the astonished Chow.

"In our garments," said Nicholas, taking off his robes and tearing the inner one into narrow slips, which being sufficient explanation for Chow, he followed his master's example, and by plaiting them together they managed to form a long rope with loops for hand holes at intervals.

The manufacture of this rope took them some hours, during which time they expected every minute that the enemy would attempt to force the entrance with a great log of wood or bar iron; fortunately, however, little dreaming that there was the most remote possibility of escape for the boys, the enemy had resolved to starve them into a surrender.

It was near dusk when they had completed their labor. Nothing could be better, for if they could escape now they would reach the town before the closing of the gates; therefore, resolving upon the attempt, they pulled aside one of the boards and lis

tened again. Fortune was in their favor, for, by the conversation that was going on among the men, they heard, that, tired of waiting, the soldier was gone in search of some heavy instrument that would force an entrance. Then Nicholas longed for a couple of big bamboos, that they might fight their way through them; not, however, being able to command the use of such weapons, they determined to make use of the rope the minute the men returned.

Having arrived at this determination, Nicholas reascended the roof and watched until he saw the soldier coming toward the pagoda, carrying a huge block of wood, when throwing the rope around the centre column or spire, so that they could pull it after them, leaving no trace of their means of escape, he signaled to Chow to follow. He swung on to the rope, keeping both ends in his hands, and lowered himself on to the projecting canopy or fringe of the second story, and by a swing of the body reached the terrace, where he waited for Chow, whose legs he guided in his descent, after which they pulled down the rope, and by performing the same feat at each story, reached the ground at the portion of the building opposite to the door, and as he had calculated, where there were no openings by which they could be seen from within.

Once upon the ground, Chow gave a caper of joy, and proposed to scamper off immediately. Nicholas, however, having effected the escape, like a wise general, wished to protect his retreat from pursuit. To do this, they entered the lower apartment of the pa-

goda, which, as they had expected, they found empty; then ascending the next story, they could see the enemy above them in consultation. It was the story with the loose ladder. So removing their only means of descent, they carried it with them some distance from the pagoda, and hastened toward the town, heartily rejoicing at the success of their scheme, and laughing merrily at the plight of their pursuers, who, when found in the pagoda, would be punished as thieves, or if they dared to explain the cause of their presence in the pagoda, would be severely bambooed for not informing the nearest mandarin of the escape of such an important prisoner as the runaway Christian.

As they reached the city just before the closing of the gates, they found so many persons hastening to their homes, that they passed through without being noticed, and speedily procured a lodging at the nearest inn.

CHAPTER XV.

NICHOLAS DISCOVERS A CONSPIRACY, AND MAKES AN UNPLEASANT ENTRY INTO PEKIN.

THE next morning they laughed heartily when the innkeeper told them that the bonzes of the monastery in the suburbs had taken some rogues who had been found concealed in the pagoda before the police tribunal, and that the mandarin had ordered all of them a severe bambooing.

Greatly as he enjoyed this news, Nicholas was too wise to wish to remain in the city any longer than possible, for he knew that the enraged junk captain would leave no effort untried to retake them; he, therefore, engaged a passage for himself and Chow in a barge that was proceeding to Tching-Kiang.

Once on board the passage boat and floating down along the royal canal, they felt secure, for surely no mishap could now happen to interrupt their journey; and so, indeed, they arrived at Tching-Kiang, where, as this city was on the banks of the Yang-tse, which here interrupts the course of the canal, they were compelled to disembark and remain one night.

The next morning Nicholas sent Chow to purchase a sword, a bow, and some arrows, in place of those taken from him in the prison. During his absence,

he sat talking to the wife of the innkeeper, for amongst the lower classes, the women are permitted to have greater intercourse, as indeed is necessary, to enable them to assist in earning the family living. He had not been chatting for any length of time when there arose a great hubbub in the street, and, looking out of the window, what was his surprise to see Chow running, as if for his life, followed by an old gentleman, who stopped every now and then to take breath and shake his fists angrily at the mob, who, believing it to be a race, shouted for mere fun. A glance, however, made Nicholas aware of the true character of the pursuer, and he begged of the woman to aid him in saving the life of his friend, who was being hunted by a madman, who if he caught him, he would kill him.

Before she could reply, Chow ran up to the door; the woman opened it, let him in, and shut it again in the face of the old gentleman, whose stomach, being of extreme protuberance and what his countrymen call full measure, received such a blow that, what with loss of breath and fullness of indignation, his big body toppled over his short legs, and he lay upon the ground with his little head turned upward, like a turtle gasping at falling heat drops.

"Truly we are lost, for the old rat is the physi cian," said Chow.

"Can the worthy woman aid us?" said Nicholas, fairly baffled.

"Let the youths follow," said the good-natured woman; adding, "Whither would they be taken?"

"To the river," replied Nicholas, not knowing where else to say.

Then conducting them to the back of the house, where stood several sedan chairs that her husband let out for hire, the woman told them to jump into one of them, gave instructions to two Coolies who were waiting for a job, wished them a prosperous journey, drew the curtains, and thus, in about an hour's time, the boys were set down upon the banks of the great Yang-tse, when, having rewarded the Coolies for their trouble, they walked leisurely along in search of a boatmen to carry them to the opposite side.

"Truly, O Chow, thou wert born in an unfortunate hour," said Nicholas.

"My master's words are true; still, the hundred families' lock must have been hung around thy servant's neck, or he could not have escaped so great a danger as this."

"Open thy lips to a good purpose, and say how this matter happened," said Nicholas, laughing.

"Well, having made the purchases, I came to the quay where the passage-boats discharge their passengers, when, *may I be punished for forgetting my masters affair*, I could think of nothing but the villain who slew my noble parent, and who, I thought, might possibly be among the soldiers who had just arrived from Pekin, and were embarking to go to Nankin, which, they say, is even now besieged by the rebels. The notion, fit only as it was for the head of a goose, could not be helped, and I stood gazing at the war-tigers. Well, thy servant had not been long

looking, when an old gentleman seized him by the arm, saying, 'Thou dog, thou stolest both my patient and my gen-seng; and, seeing that it was the physician, I jerked off his hand, took to my heels, and, fearing for the safety of my master should the crowd stop me, I frightened them by calling out, 'Beware, my brethren, of the madman,' and as that made the frightened people stand aside, I was enabled to reach the inn in safety."

"Truly this was well done," said Nicholas; but as, at that moment, they had arrived at a great swamp of paddy, or rice-fields, which stretched for miles inland down to the very edge of the river, and was covered with water of sufficient depth to enable the shallow boats to sail for miles into the interior, their progress was stopped, when Nicholas said, as he pointed to a multitude of men, women, and children, who, at some little distance, with their trousers tucked up to the knees, appeared to be amusing themselves with paddling about in the water, "Let us catch the eyeballs of one of yonder shrimp hunters."

These people were a species of jacks-in-the-water, who, as they stalked about every now and then pulled their legs out of the mud, and taking something from it, deposited it in a small bag which they had by their sides. They were mud fishers in search for prawn, shrimps, and other small fish, which, when felt by the foot, they dexterously seized between the toes. This is only one instance in which these poor people show themselves as clever with the foot as the hand

and another proof of the old axiom, that necessity is the mother of invention.

For some time they endeavored to call the attention of one of these people without avail; then, holding up a copper coin and shouting, a man came to them, and soon after fetched a boatman, who, for a small sum, engaged to row them in search of a ferry-boat.

The little boat paddled through the fields, past men engaged in wild geese catching, and huge duck boats, from the sides of which, down inclined boards, hundreds of those birds were waddling into the fields, as industriously earning their living among the rice stubble as the mud fishers.

These duck keepers are a class peculiar to the Chinese. Their boats are large and roomy, with a broad board extending around the sides for a promenade for the birds, which are as dear to their masters as the pig is to the Irishman. The birds have the largest apartment of the floating house. In the morning the ducks waddle round the promenade at their pleasure, except after the rice harvest has been gathered, when the boards are inclined, and they walk up and down the slope at their will; and so well are they brought up, that, if hundreds of them are out upon a cruise, they will instantly return to the boat at their master's whistle.

Once in the boat, Nicholas had no wish to leave it, till he had crossed the river. This he had some difficulty in persuading the man to do, for it was three leagues broad at that part. The sight, however of a

piece of silver strengthened his courage, and, fixing up his little sail of bamboo matting, he made the attempt, when, after some hours, they reached the opposite banks, dismissed the boatman, and felt as pleased as a fugitive between whom and the bloodhounds a vast water track has passed.

Having crossed the great river, they had no fear of further pursuit, so, hiring two sedan chairs, they reached Kui-Chow the same evening. The next morning they again took passage upon the Royal Canal, down which they traveled for some days, till they arrived at Yang-Chow, a city celebrated for its manufacture of salt and singing girls. These poor creatures are matter of commerce with the merchants, who have taught them to sing, paint, and play on musical instruments, when they can sell them for very large sums of money to the great lords, who purchase them for the recreation of their households.

Resting at this city for one day, they again started upon their journey, and in a few weeks arrived at Tien-Sing, from which place they proceeded by a small canal to Tsing-Chow, the nearest place to Pekin, where they landed.

"Thanks be to Tien, my master, we shall soon be in the venerable city itself."

"Thou art fond of Pekin, Chow?"

"The tombs of thy servant's ancestors are near its walls," said Chow, gloomily.

"Why, in the name of the social relations, art thou as dull as a tailless peacock?" said Nicholas.

"It is filial pity, for last night I dreamt that I should discover in Pekin the dog who slew my venerable parent, and should I die without searching him out, the tombs of my ancestors would refuse to hold me."

"These are wild words and foolish fancies, Chow," aid Nicholas; adding, as he beheld the boy stare in the faces of the passers-by, "Moreover, if thy manners are so barbarous, thou wilt surely get into trouble; and, believing that occupation or a mission would drive these thoughts from Chow's mind, he stopped at the house of a dealer in horses, and, having bargained for two, said, "Thou art well informed of the ins and outs of Pekin, Chow?"

"Every rat-hole, my master," was the reply.

"Then for fear that the hour may be too late ere I reach the city, take one of these horses and hasten to the great square, where thou wilt find one Yang, a wealthy merchant; seek his presence, and inform him that the son of his correspondent, the great merchant of the south, would beg a lodging of him while he remains in the capital."

"Thy commands shall be obeyed," said Chow, turning a sumersault on to the back of one of the horses, and in another instant was at full gallop toward Pekin.

Nicholas then sought a house of refreshment, and, having regaled himself with a cup of hot tea and rice cakes, mounted the other animal, intending to follow Chow.

The distance, however, was longer than he had cal-

culated; moreover he took the longest road, so that by the time he reached within view of the walls, towers, and yellow roofs, of the imperial city, the gates were closed for the night, and none would be permitted to pass without a searching scrutiny; so, although much vexed, he determined to seek a lodging at an inn he had passed on the road. However, the innkeeper addressing him, rudely said, "How is this, that a mere boy should be without the walls at this hour? Has he no respect for his parents, who will assuredly be punished for their neglect?"

"Is the worthy innkeeper of barbarian parents, that he would refuse to lodge a youth, who, tired and weary, has but just arrived from a long journey, and is willing to pay handsomely?" said Nicholas, showing him about an ounce of silver.

"Truly the vision of thy servant must have been dull, that he could not before perceive that the youth before him was nobly allied and of great respectability," said the man, now that he greedily eyed the precious metal. "Yet," he added, "it is not possible that the noble youth can lodge beneath this roof, for the inn is already crowded with merchants, who enter Pekin at daylight."

"Then will I trouble the most perfect of innkeepers no longer," replied Nicholas, believing the man to be an extortioner.

"The words of thy servant are as true as the sacred books, but if the noble youth will
upon the porter he can procure a

mansion," replied the man, as he pointed to a large house near the inn.

"What words are these? Yonder mansion is the palace of some noble mandarin, who will deservedly chastise thee for thy insolence in making his house a common inn."

"Not so, O noble youth, for although the front is fair to look at, the house is in ruins and under the care of a porter. The mandarin is in a far distant province, if, indeed, as is reported, he is not at this moment in rebellion against the Emperor."

"Tien forbid that a true-born Chinese should soil the soles of his boots with the dust of a traitor's door stone," said Nicholas.

"Thy servant said it was but rumored, O loyal youth," replied the innkeeper; adding angrily, "Truly if thou refusest this thou wilt get none other lodging."

"Truly it may be but scandal, therefore show me to this porter, and thou shalt be rewarded for thy trouble," replied Nicholas.

The innkeeper then conducting him to one of the smaller of the three doors in the wall of respect, which, as with all the houses of the great, are built before the house, summoned the porter, who for a piece of silver took charge of his horse, introduced him into a small room, which led from one side of the great central hall, and leaving him a sleeping mat withdrew, when Nicholas laid himself at full length, glad enough to get the opportunity of getting a good night's rest.

Nicholas had not slept long before he was awakened by the sound of voices, which he could hear so clearly and distinctly that he knew it proceeded from some adjoining room. More vexed, however, at the disturbance than curious to listen to the conversation, he turned over and tried to sleep, but then the tones became louder, and he fancied he heard his father's name. If so, it evidently concerned him; therefore in self-defence, he must listen; and, setting up on his mat, he saw that he was in a double room divided by folding doors, between the crevices of which came a glimmering light, so creeping softly forward, he peeped through. There at a table, beneath a painted lantern, the light from which played upon their faces, sat two men of tall stature and soldier-like appearance, but neither of whom could he at first recognise. A minute more, however, and he fancied that in one he could trace familiar features; still he could not recall them to his memory. He listened attentively, for the taller man spoke earnestly for some time of such matters that made the boy burn with rage and horror. When he had concluded, the other smiled and said, "Truly, O illustrious prince, we have secured the ambitious pirate of the south. May the time for action speedily arrive." No sooner had he spoken, than, like a glimpse of light in a cavern, the recognition flashed across the boy's mind. The last speaker was the mandarin envoy who had visited his father's vessel, and he trembled for the safety of the Emperor's letter. It was consolatory, however, that should they meet, the mandarin would not know

him, for they had not met on board the vessel. When the mandarin had spoken, his companion said, "Hush, general! no tiles, for walls may have ears; but enough, I am satisfied." Then after whispering together for some little time, they arose, and Nicholas crept back to his mat. The moment after to his horror, the doors were thrown open, and the prince exclaimed, "How! we are betrayed; what rogue is this?"

"Silence, my prince, he sleeps, and can have heard nothing," said the other, cutting down the lantern from the other room and holding it before the pretending sleeper, who, notwithstanding his perilous position, did not move a muscle. The boy, however, had a harder trial yet, for drawing his dagger, the prince exclaimed, "True, general, he may not have heard—but, he may—and as dead dogs can't bark—" but, as the prince was about to strike, and the brave boy was mentally preparing to clutch at the weapon, with both hands, the mandarin caught the arm of the would-be assassin, led him into the other room, whispered with him, and then they both left the house, after securing all the doors from the outer side.

Bathed in a cold sweat, Nicholas arose and examined the room, to find some means of escape, for he little doubted that they would speedily return. It was useless, and he made up his mind to await the chapter of accidents. For some time fear kept him awake, but at length nature would have her way and he fell off to sleep.

When he awoke he found a party of yah-yu and

the porter of the house at his side; the latter looking at him maliciously, said, "Take the vile dog before the police tribunal, he is a thief and a rogue."

"Silence, rascal! for thou knowest that I am no thief, but a traveler who paid thee for a night's lodging."

"Away with the young rogue," said the porter; and, binding him hand and foot, Nicholas was made to make his first entry into Pekin amid the shouts of the rabble, who were delighted that so vile a housebreaker and thief should be caught.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BOYS AGAIN IN TROUBLE.

SMARTING with indignation at the accusation, which had evidently been made for the purpose of getting him transported to the penal province, Nicholas was taken before the police mandarin like a common thief. When, however, they reached the tribunal, they found the magistrate engaged examining witnesses on the part of a military mandarin who had been insulted in the public streets. "Let the worthy officer state his complaint," said the mandarin.

"Know, O fountain of justice," said the officer, joining his hands above his head, and bowing nearly to the ground three successive times, "that as thy servant was riding through the great square, a young man, possessed either with demons or samshu, jumped so rudely before me that I stumbled and fell to the earth, and when he stared me full in the face like a hungry wolf, I remonstrated, but the rascal held me down, continuing to stare with glaring eyeballs; he then tore the plaster from this wound which I received on my cheek in fighting the rebels of Chensi, and began to dance round me most frantically with a drawn sword, crying, 'Thou villain, slayer of honest folks' parents, I have found thee at last, and will

cut thee into pieces small enough for mince pies. Alarmed at this violent rudeness, I could but say, "Hold, dog, I am a soldier of the Emperor." 'Ah, ah! I know thou art, thou villain,' said he. 'I have received a wound,' said thy servant. 'Ah, ah! I know thou hast, thou villain,' again said the madman. Begone, dog, what wouldst thou do?' said I. 'Slay thee, and burn thy house, even as thou didst my parents, villain;' whereupon the rascal would have slain thy servant upon the instant but for the timely aid of this good merchant Yang," said the soldier, pointing to a stout elderly man who stood by his side.

Now, guessing at once that this terrible prisoner must be Chow, Nicholas felt no surprise when he saw the poor fellow, with his arms tied behind him, dragged before the mandarin, who said, "What says the murdering thief to this charge?"

"What can the unfortunate Chow say, most beneficent father and mother of justice, but that it was all a mistake, and that thy unworthy slave has ever been taught that no man should exist beneath the same heaven with the murderer of his parents?" said Chow, as he cast some comical glances at the bamboo canes.

"What words are these? What has this most wise maxim to do with thy case, fellow?" said the mandarin.

"Much, O magnificent judge, for thy slave's father was destroyed by the chief officer of the rebel Li-Kong, whom this worthy war-tiger unfortunately

resembles, both in the wound on the cheek, and the length of his hair."

"If thy words are not false, then thou art a worthy but unfortunate servant of the holy lord our Emperor," said the mandarin; "but who will assur us of this?'

"Truly will I, O learned judge," cried out Nicholas.

"Who is this dog, that speaks without prostrating his mean person at the feet of justice?" said the mandarin.

"A thief and a rascal, who is awaiting to be tried," cried the porter who had accused Nicholas.

"By the beard of Confucius, this is daring; give the dog a dozen strokes," said the mandarin.

"Stay thy command, O running fountain of justice; let not thy celestial ears be profanely filled by the tongues of dogs," shrieked Chow with fear, as soon as he saw that his master was a prisoner.

The mandarin would have visited this daring interruption with a heavy punishment, but for some words whispered in his ears by the merchant Yang, and which caused him to smile and say, "The honorable merchant Yang has answered for thy truth boy; but that for the future you may not be liable to such mistakes, we will give thee a fatherly correction." The mandarin then pulled fifty reeds from the case, and threw them upon the floor, whereupon two of the footmen caught hold of Chow, took off his robe, and held him on the floor, while another administered fifty blows, after which Chow got upon his legs, made

a very wry face, and twisted and writhed about like an eel making an effort to walk upon the tip of his tail.

"Leave off twisting and twirling thyself out of nature, thou dog, and return thanks to his high justiceship for his kindness in correcting so miserable an affair as thy mean self," said one of the footmen.

With one eye glaring upon the footman, and the other smiling upon the mandarin, Chow held his hands behind his back to assuage the pain, and made two or three attempts to bend his back, but failing, dropped suddenly on his knees, and bowing his head to the ground, said, but with a twist of his back or grimace between every word, "Thy correction—O father- and mother—of justice, is beneficial, but like physic would be——"

"What, boy?" said the mandarin, laughing.

"More agreeable if it were tasteless, yet thy mean servant thanks thee, noble judge, for this care of his mind;" and Chow hopped among the bystanders.

When Chow had been disposed of, the porter formerly charged Nicholas with entering the mansion at night for the purpose of robbery.

"Who art thou boy; thy name, surname, and from what province?" said the mandarin kindly.

"The mean name of thy unworthy servant is Nicholas, of the province of Fokien, from whence he has traveled on special affairs to a worthy merchant of Pekin, named Yang."

"So far thy words are truth," said the mandarin, to the astonishment of Nicholas; "but what answer can the youth make to the charge of this man?"

"That it is vile and false, and that the dog is a traitor in league with rebels, who happening to meet with thy servant last night at the same house, are fearful that he may have discovered their plots, and so hope to destroy him."

At that moment there arose a great bustle in the court, and a cry of "Make way for the illustrious deputy-general of the nine gates," and a military mandarin, with a tiger painted on his breast, a gold button and a peacock's feather in his cap, both of which bespoke his high rank, entered the tribunal, and testified to the guilt of Nicholas, who recognizing in him the man who had been addressed the previous night by the title of general, exclaimed, "Behold, O Mandarin, one of the traitors."

Great was the effect of the new comer upon the judge, for, not paying the least attention to the exclamation of Nicholas, he said, "Truly falsehood will not flow from the lips of the Heaven-appointed deputy-general. As for thee (turning to Nicholas,) vile dog, as thy guilt is now clear, thou shalt receive one hundred blows, and be banished for life."

Now, while the mandarin was speaking, Chow happening to get a full view of the general's face, rushed through the crowd, crying, "It is the villain, it is the destroyer of my parents,' and in another moment he had clutched the general by the throat, thrown him upon the ground, and would have strangled him, but for the help of the footmen, who speedily seized him, bound his arms, and carried him with Nicholas to the prison.

"This fancy, that every officer you meet is the destroyer of your parents, will prove thy destruction, my poor Chow," said Nicholas, as soon as they were alone in the prison.

"There can be no doubt it is the villain, for saw you not the wound upon his cheek? but, alas! my trouble is the greater that I slew him not before we were shut up in a cage like two dogs for fattening."

"Thy liberty at least was secure, but for thy foolish attack upon the mandarin of war."

"By the vermillion pencil itself, Chow cares not for liberty, if they ruin his noble master."

Then Nicholas began to think upon his miserable position,—sentenced to be beaten with the bamboo to him worse than death, for, being born upon the coast, unlike most Chinese, he had never been subjected to such a degradation; and then to be banished for life, at the very commencement of his career,—it was horrible. Greater, however, was his anxiety for the safety of his father's letters. Could he but send a message to the merchant Yang,—alas! that was impossible. Should he give it to Chow? No; for he knew not what punishment awaited the boy for assaulting so great an officer. He was indeed at his wit's end, and he prayed to the Almighty for aid.

"Let not the noble Nicholas be so sad, for truly the gods can never desert the innocent and unfortunate," said Chow, while tears of affection wetted his cheeks; adding, "I will pray of them to take my worthless life in exchange for thy liberty."

"I can not, do not doubt thy affection, my good Chow, but place not my faith in these foolish deities; there is but One true God, whose Son died on the cross to save mankind, and in Him I trust in my hour of difficulty."

"My master is of the religion of the Fan-Kwi (foreign devils.) Will their god aid him in the hour of his troubles?" replied Chow, despondingly.

"Thou wilt see Chow," replied Nicholas, angrily.

"Truly, but in the mean time the bamboo will cut us into strips like an umbrella in a storm," said Chow, making such queer contortions and grimaces, that in spite of his troubles Nicholas could not help laughing. "Then, he added, "thy servant has a scheme that will save thee, my generous master."

"Open thy lips, O wise and prudent youth," said Nicholas.

"The noble Nicholas has a father?"

"Truly, a noble one."

"Then, as Chow has neither father, mother, nor aught else, but hatred for his father's slayer and gratitude to the preserver of his life——"

"What words are these?" said Nicholas, impatiently.

"The good Nicholas has money; let him give it to Chow, and he will bribe the mandarin to slit him into ribbons in thy stead," said Chow, seriously.

"Silence, Chow! this scheme of thine is offensive,' said Nicholas, not without a tear at the boys devotion.

"Alas! of what use is a friend if he will not be serviceable in the hour of need?" said Chow.

Their conversation was interrupted by the opening of the door.

"It is the illustrious Yang himself, who spoke good words to the boy-correcting mandarin; may he be turned into a bamboo himself in the next world," exclaimed Chow with a writhe of remembrance.

"Thou art the son of the good merchant, my correspondent?" said Yang.

"The face of the worthy merchant, is welcome in the hour of difficulty," said Nicholas.

"That difficulty is past, for thou art released," replied Yang, leading him to a covered vehicle, into which Chow followed, and all three proceeded to the merchant's house, where they found a substantial meal awaiting them, a portion of which Chow carried with him to another apartment.

"Will the venerable Yang say by what fortunate chance he was enabled to confer upon the son of his correspondent such an everlasting debt of gratitude!" said Nicholas.

"Know then, my nephew, for my nephew thou art, being the son of my adopted brother, that when the comical ape Chow brought thy message, I watched for thy coming till evening, when knowing that you could not pass through the gates that night, I lodged Chow in my house. This morning I went to meet you, telling Chow to follow close behind my chair. Passing through the great square we met with the military officer whose affair took us to the tribunal, where by means of a small present secretly conveyed to the mandarin, I succeeded in getting the foolish fellow

off with a mere fatherly correction, which the dispenser of justice was compelled to give him for form's sake. This affair being settled, judge my horror at finding you charged with so fearful a crime. However, I was prepared; for Chow, while listening to his own accuser, had seen you in the custody of the yah-yu, to whom I went, and by means of a bribe made them tell me the reason of your being in that plight. When I had learned the particulars, I whispered to the mandarin that I would present him with a handsome sum in silver if he would treat you leniently. But when the favorite general of the Prince Li-Kong appeared, the affair took another turn, and for fear of losing his own head, the mandarin was compelled to condemn you. Yet, sad as this was, it was to be managed with money. So by giving a handsome sum to an already condemned criminal, the poor wretch agreed to suffer in your place."

"How! what rascality is this? Surely the innocent shall not suffer. The mandarin must be sought,' said Nicholas.

"Hist, hist, my good nephew! it is all over; for, foreseeing your objection, the money was handed over to the man's family and he himself dispatched at once to the penal settlement for condemned criminals."

"It is a vile practice, O Yang," said Nicholas with disgust.

"It is a common one," replied the merchant; adding, "but what brings the son of the great merchant to Pekin? he is young to be entrusted so great a 'ourney."

"Are then the special secrets of my noble parent of so little value that they may be wafted about the very air of this vile city of Pekin?" said Nicholas.

"Pardon thy servant, O noble youth, who seeks to know thy affairs that he may help to render them prosperous."

"The worthy Yang must forgive the haste of a boy who so far forgets his duty to his elder," said Nicholas.

That night the boys slept at Yang's house.

CHAPTER XVII.

NICHOLAS RESOLVES UPON A DANGEROUS ADVENTURE.

THE following morning when Nicholas saw the merchant, he said, "Yesterday the worthy Yang would have learned the object of my visit to Pekin. I would gain admittance to the imperial palace. Will he aid me?"

"Alas! my nephew, nothing can be more difficult, for it is crowded with bonzes, and I fear worse—rebels, who swarm around the royal person like hornets; but whom seekest thou within the outer palaces?"

"Even the Son of Heaven himself, at the feet of whose throne I would kneel."

"Is the youth bereft of his senses? does he not know that it is certain death to pass the prohibited wall of the inner palace?"

"May then the illustrious Prince Woo-san-Kwei be found within the palace?" asked Nicholas.

"Nay, even if thou couldst boast the friendship of the great Woo-san-Kwei thou wouldst not be safe. The prince is too honest and brave to be much in favor just now. Wouldst thou be safe, youth, thou must seek the Prince Li-Kong."

"The vile traitor," muttered Nicholas at the name.

"Hist, hist! thou wilt assuredly lose thy head, boy," said Yang, placing his finger upon his lips.

"Let the friend of the merchant of the south open his lips to a purpose. Can, or can he not, aid me to gain admittance within the palace? for it is my father's command that I should seek the Emperor or the Prince Woo-san-Kwei, and at the peril of my life he must be obeyed," said Nicholas firmly.

"Since thou art determined, take this," said Yang placing a ring on the boy's finger; adding, "It will pass thee through the guards of the outer palaces and courts as far as the prohibited wall, and then proceed no further, as you value your life, but await the approach of one of the officers of the guard, to whom you must show that ring, and tell him that you have business with the red-girdled Prince Woo-san-Kwei; further, be prudent, or thou wilt seek thy death."

"The worthy Yang has indeed filled me with gratitude," said Nicholas, who then sent Chow for a chair. When the boy returned he asked his master to what part of the city he would be carried.

"To the palace."

"By the five social relations the noble Nicholas is tired of this world, for he has no sooner escaped one death than he seeks another," said Chow.

"Wag not thy foolish tongue, O Chow, but if thy heart fails thee stay behind."

"And leave the noble Nicholas to go to the world of spirits alone? that would indeed be base. No, no; Chow will follow; but my noble master has forgotten his sword, he may require it," said the boy.

"I am sufficiently armed," replied Nicholas showing the hilt of a small dagger beneath his robe, adding, "Now let us proceed."

They then passed through the streets, which swarmed with people who were as busy as bees in a hive, some making purchases of itinerant tradespeople, viewing the wonderful feats of jugglers, mountebanks, or players, listening to the marvelous narratives of *vivâ voce* novelists, or testing their fates with cheating fortune-tellers. As they approached the palace, they found crowds of people gazing at the great observatory, upon the top of which the astronomers of the court, in full dress, were engaged in watching the heavens. When they arrived at the wall which confined the city of buildings that made up the imperial residence, Nicholas dismissed the chairman, and they passed into the first court, which was as large and full of houses as a small country town. It took half an hour to walk through; and as they had to traverse seven more of these courts, which took them three hours, you may imagine the great extent of the whole palace. The last but one was surrounded with the palaces of the princes of the red girdle, or those more distant in blood from the throne. This court was crowded with mandarins, officers, eunuchs, and soldiers of the Emperor, who were earnestly peering through telescopes at the sun, which from a deep blood red became yellow and dim, and gradually more and more opaque, till the whole world seemed to be enveloped in darkness, and darkness blacker than midnight, for there was no moon.

When the earth's light became extinguished, the mandarins fell flat upon their faces, moaning aloud, while the noise from thousands of drums shook the very walls.

"Let us fall upon our faces, O my master, and pray to the terrible dragon," exclaimed Chow, suiting the action to the word, and endeavoring to drag Nicholas with him. As, however, Nicholas was averse to this superstition, he refused to comply, and stood looking upon the people as if they had been performing for his especial and solitary benefit.

Whatever was the superstition, it laid firm hold of Chow, who, long after the light had returned to the heavens and the other people to their feet, continued to moan, kick his legs, and knock the earth with his forehead. At length, after repeatedly calling to him in vain, Nicholas turned him upon his back, when, opening his eyes and finding the light had returned, he jumped upon his feet, and, as the sweat of fear rolled from his brow, said, "Thank the gods, the greedy monster of a dragon has not swallowed the sun and moon. O master, what would become of us all; what would become of day and night without the sun and moon?"

"Art thou foolish, O Chow, to believe that this eclipse was caused by the effort of a monster dragon to swallow the heavenly luminaries?"

"Who is thy servant, O noble Nicholas, that he should doubt, when learned mandarins believe?" said Chow.

"Know, O Chow, that the mandarins believe in

"Truly so; for whose ears could be so dull as not to have drunk in his fame as a wise minister of state?"

"Yet such is the viscissitude of fortune, that the colao is now before thee, O youth, plucked of the peacock feather, and the golden ball torn from his cap."

"The great and good colao degraded to a mean soldier! Are such things possible? O unfortunate man!" said Nicholas, bowing respectfully to the fallen noble.

"The purest sky is sometimes shaded by the blackest cloud. The cloud over the head of Ki is the Prince Li-Kong, to whom every thing is now possible; but open thy lips, youth, and send forth thy wishes with the Prince Woo-san-Kwei. If it be to ask promotion to some office, know that he has none to give, for the shadow of Li-Kong stands between him and the Majesty of China."

"Thy servant seeketh nothing for himself, O noble Ki, but to serve the Emperor, to whom through the great Woo-san-Kwei, he would present a petition."

"All petitions now pass through the Prince Li-Kong," said Ki sorrowfully.

"Then, by the vermilion pencil, I will seek the Emperor himself, O noble Ki."

"Thou wouldst be slain in the attempt, O daring boy; there is but one means."

"Name it, O noble Ki, and thy name shall be buried in my heart," said Nicholas impetuously.

"It would be but to condemn thee to death."

"Thou art laughing at me, O noble Ki," replied Nicholas bitterly.

"Not so, youth; and since thou hast set thy heart upon the venture, open thine ears to the only means," said Ki; adding, "Know that the Emperor has one young and beautiful daughter, who apart from the bonzes and Li-Kong, alone dares to present a petition to his majesty."

"Again, I say, thou art laughing at me, O cruel Ki; for how is it possible for a strange youth to pass the guard that surrounds the palace of the ladies?"

"Know then, further, that every morning the princess, with her ladies, walks in those gardens just beyond the prohibited wall; through the outer gate you can pass by means of this key," said Ki, giving him a key; adding, "Near the inner wall there is a tall mulberry-tree, up which you must climb, and so reach the top, and fall into the gardens; then hide thyself till the royal lady passes. She will be attended by the lady Candida Hiu, at whose feet throw thyself, proclaim thy mission, and she will influence her beautiful mistress to deliver thy petition to the Emperor; but remember, O youth, should you cross the path of one of the eunuchs of the palace thy hours are numbered."

"Noble Ki, I am thy servant for life," said Nicholas, kneeling and clasping the knees of the old colao; adding, "but say, O Ki, who is this Lady Candida Hiu?"

"The pupil of the good Christian fathers whom the bonzes would have massacred, the Lady Candida is the friend and teacher of the princess, and but for her influence over her royal mistress, the punishment

would be death for worshiping in any of the many churches erected by the lady herself."

"Art thou then a disciple of the Saviour of mankind, O Ki?"

"To the teaching of the lady Candida Hiu am I indebted for having forsworn the stupid worship of Fo and the selfish philosophy of Confucius," replied the colao; adding, "But ask no more, O youth, for to speak of Christ out of the pale of that lady's influence is to earn disgrace, if not death." So saying the ex-minister retired, leaving Nicholas to his own thoughts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE IMPERIAL GARDENS.

THE next morning Nicholas proceeded on his mission, and, as the courts of the palace were crowded with soldiers and mandarins of various ranks, in waiting to receive the great lords of state, who were that day to have audience with the Emperor, he managed to pass through the crowd without being once challenged. With but little difficulty, he found the door mentioned by Ki, and passing through by means of the key, he entered a narrow lane between two walls. Near the inner wall stood the mulberry-tree, up which he clambered quickly, for he knew not who might enter the passage. When, by means of one of the branches, he had gained the top of the wall, his eyes drank in a new pleasure. There, before, beneath were the magnificent gardens of the inner palace, and so charmed were his senses that for a minute it seemed as if the penalty of death were but a small price for the vision. The enclosed grounds were of many miles extent, and so varied in their arrangement, that they might have served for a model of the empire itself. There was something of most things natural and artificial in China: towering mountains cut into terraces and planted with trees of rarity and beauty; fertile valleys laid out in orange groves and

intermingled with murmuring rivulets; then bridges of tinted marble, wrought to resemble flying dragons, whose eyes and scales were fashioned from colored metals, flew across small lakes of clear, transparent water, in which, as a paradise of their own, gamboled shoals of gold and silver fish, which at that time had not been brought to Europe; then orchards of fruit trees, making the morning air redolent with the mingled scents of rare specimens of pears, apples, peaches, citrons, apricots, muscadine grapes, pomegranates, and oranges. The sides of the main canal, from which the dripping rivulets sprang, were embossed with cypress and mulberry-trees, whose feet seemed planted in a sprinkled fringe of water melons. On this canal, with its awning of yellow silk and golden fringe, floated the gilded japanned pleasure barge of the ladies.

For a time the boy's head swam with a new sensation. Such, thought he, must have been the garden of that Emperor whose jealousy of the powers of the cruel winter over his summer beauties caused him to waste the revenue of a kingdom and the industry of a whole people in creating a garden of artificial flowers, forgetting that the annual decay was alone the cause of the ever-living freshness and perfume of nature.

Then the sweet scents and beauteous sight tired Nicholas, for he thought of the suffering, starving people. Surely it should not be possible for such a paradise to exist in the midst of so much treason and rotten-heartedness, and then the bold sea-boy

thought of his own rough life, and became disgusted with himself for dwelling upon so much sensuousness, for he knew that the empire had never smiled and prospered with a happy, peaceable and well-fed people, except when the Emperor had set the example of temperance and labor; and, moreover, that luxury and indolence had ever preceded the downfall of dynasties; and then by far more interesting became the cotton, the tallow and the mulberry-trees that Heaven had bestowed upon the land of China for the support of its hundreds of millions, and which had no vocation in such a garden of luxury.

As it must be interesting to my young readers, I will give a description of these singularly valuable trees. The seed of the cotton shrub is sown by the husbandmen on the same day that they get in the harvest. When the rain has moistened the earth the shrub thrusts itself forward to a height of about two feet, and in the month of August gives forth a yellow or a red flower, which fades into a pod, which on the fortieth day after the appearance of the flower divides itself into three parts, each containing a wrapping of pure white cotton, similar in size to the ball of the silk-worm. At this period, the husbandmen fasten the ball to the pod, leaving it till the following year, when the fibres of the cotton become so securely fastened to the seeds, that the husbandman is compelled to separate them by means of two thin rollers, one of wood and the other of iron, placed so close to each other, that in passing the cotton between them, the naked seed is exuded from behind. The

cotton is then carded and ready to be converted into calico, an employment that gives food to many thou sands of people.

Of equal value and more curious is the tallow-tree, which lights the whole of the empire. While the leaves and long stalks of this plant cause it to resemble the aspen and the birch, its trunk and branches resemble in shape, height, and size the cherry-tree From the grey bark, spring long elastic branches, the leaves of which grow but from the middle to the end, where they finish in a tuft, where the fruit grows in a hard brown husk of triangular form. The husk generally contains three kernels, covered with a thin substance resembling white tallow. When the husk begins to open and fall away, the fruit gradually appears. Each kernel contains another of the size of a hemp seed, which from its oleaginous nature is converted into oil.

To make the tallow, the shell and kernel are beaten together in boiling water till the surface becomes covered with fat, which when cold, condenses; then, by adding fair proportions of linseed oil and wax to give consistency, they have produced the material which, when shaped around a wick of hollow reed, produces the candles in use in China. Thus does nature and the ingenuity of the people create from this extraordinary tree a double means of lighting the empire.

As for the mulberry-tree, it is so well known that I need but tell you, that after rice, the Chinese consider its culture as a sacred duty, and deservedly so, for by feeding the silk-worm, it not only clothes the people,

but silk, being in immense demand over the known world, is the primary means of giving them employment; indeed the mulberry-tree is an "institution," and of such ancient date, that even in four thousand years old China, which contains the oldest records in the world, there is no authentic record of its discovery. There is a legend, however, "that, till the days of Ti-Long, the wife of the Emperor Hoang-ti, the people were savages, and used the skins of animals for clothing, but her far-sighted majesty noticed that as the people were many, and the animals few, they would soon become short of garments, when, like the parent of invention, she was pushed to a discovery that worms might be made the greatest manufacturers of her empire; and that there is some truth in this fable seems likely, as, from the earliest times, the Empress of China has had a portion of the grounds of the palace planted as a mulberry grove, where, at certain periods of the year, she goes in state, to show her interest in the silk manufacture, by gathering three mulberry leaves, and unwinding a quantity of silk. Lastly, I may tell you, that the most learned men and the greatest ministers have devoted a great portion of their lives to teach the people "how to bring up and feed silk worms, so as to obtain the greatest quantity and best quality of silk."

Is it not unjust that the race of worms should have been so long despised, when, for thousands of years, one of their representatives has been at the base of the prosperity of the largest, most populated, and longest-enduring empire since the foundation of the world?

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRINCESSES OF THE MINGS, AND THE LADY CANDIDA.

ENWRAPPED as the mind of Nicholas had been in the delicious scene around him, no sooner did he reach the ground than a bitter feeling arose that his beloved Emperor should be content to repose in such soft and costly indolence, while millions of his subjects were being plundered by rapacious nobles. In deep thought he reached the far-famed mulberry orchard, where, for a time, he stood contemplating the industry of the marvelous little worms whose number and color cast a sickly hue over the broad green foliage of the trees, then in full leaf. Passing through this orchard, he came in front of a mimic palace, hewn out of rock crystal, and which glittered in the sun, so that it was some minutes before his dazzled vision could perceive that he was near the imperial menagerie and aviary, where were kept the rare beasts and birds presented to the Emperor by his tributary kings. The sight was curious, and he would have stopped, but for the rustling of leaves in the orchard, and the sound of soft footsteps, that warned him of his imprudence, and made him seek shelter in a small pagoda, from whence, through a kind of

loophole which fronted the menagerie, he could see without being seen. Now his heart beat tremulously; the footsteps might be those of the princess and her ladies. He was right in his conjecture, for scarcely had he placed himself at the loophole, when two ladies, attended by female slaves, who held above the heads of their mistresses umbrellas of embroidered yellow silk deeply fringed with gold, came toward the menagerie. The princess was of middle height, with a form as graceful and elastic as a fawn; her face, like those of all of her race, was broad, but fair almost as a European blonde, yet looked the fairer from its contrast with the raven hair and eyelashes which beneath the thin brows shaded a pair of tiny jet black eyes, which like the purest diamonds, compensated by fire for their deficiency in size, and with the delicately small mouth, parted by a pair of thin pouting lips, lit up her sweet countenance with animation and vivacity. Of her hands and feet I can say nothing, for they were hidden beneath the ample folds of her long gold-embroidered robe of yellow satin. Upon her head she wore a kind of crown of rich silk, decorated upon each side with a "fong-hoang," the phœnix of China, which it is believed has but once appeared, and whose next advent will be the fore-running of the golden age. The extended wings of the little birds, which were of frosted gold, and sparkling with jewels, rested upon the forepart of the crown, so that while their beaks fell over the forehead, the spreading plumage of their tails afforded a graceful crest upon its summit; moreover they

appeared to come with a tiny parterre of artificial flowers, which were fastened with a bevy of silver bodkins, whose heads were formed out of pearls, diamonds, and rubies; but far beyond her rare beauty and costly attire was the artlessness of her manner, which, arising from a virtuous heart and cultivated mind, won the love of all with whom she came in contact.

As for Nicholas, he was bewitched, and from the moment his eyes rested upon her, he lost all doubt of the success of his mission.

Of the lady in attendance I will only say, that she was of maturer age, and of fuller form. More plainly attired than the royal lady, she wore a robe of green silk, embroidered with flowers of the same color, and a head-dress of silk, slightly sprinkled with large pearls; her brow was high, and her features regular and handsome, but seemingly shadowed with care for the interests and ministers of Christ, to whose doctrines she had long been a convert; for this lady was no other than the illustrious Candida Hiu, of whom the colao had spoken to Nicholas. Her history was remarkable, and may be told in a few lines. The Emperor at the commencement of his reign, had been so favorably disposed to the Christian religion, that, although not a convert himself, he had permitted many of the lords and ladies of his court to embrace its tenets; chief and most sincere among the proselytes had been the prime minister, Paul Syu, whose influence over his weak-minded master had enabled him to protect the missionaries from the

jealous bonzes and pagan mandarins around. No sooner, however, had this good man gone to his grave, than the bonzes accused the Christians of endeavoring to subvert the reigning family, and so artfully did they intrigue, that the Emperor ordered the Christians to leave China, and a terrible persecution took place, when all the court but the Lady Candida and the son and daughter of the monarch, returned to the worship of Fo. As I have said, the Emperor's love was so great for his beautiful daughter, that he permitted the princess and her friend Candida to follow the dictates of their own hearts; hence it was that the good lady had been able to protect her fellow-Christians from the rapacity of the bonzes and mandarins, even to obtaining permission for them to remain in Pekin. Further, to show her zeal, she founded at her own cost no less than thirty churches in different parts of the empire, and had vast numbers of religious books translated into Chinese, which she distributed by means not only of blind beggars, but vagabond fortune-tellers, whom she paid handsomely to stand at the corners of streets, and read the Gospel, in place of practicing upon the credulity of the populace with their vile falsehoods. Such were the two ladies now within a few yards of Nicholas.

CHAPTER XX.

DANGER OF THE PRINCESS.—HER RESCUE BY NICHOLAS.

As the princess and her friend approached, Nicholas almost felt ashamed of his intrusion upon their privacy. Should he not appear to them in the despicable light of an eaves-dropper? Then he would determine to come forward, but fell back again in dread of giving offence. Then the ladies began a conversation, and he dared not interrupt them.

"This then, dear Candida, is the sin-fin that my royal parent values so highly," said the princess, looking at a large black ape of the ourang-outang species, which sat grinning, with its elbows upon its knees.

"Truly, dear princess, this is the wonderful beast that the Prince Li-Kong has presented to the Emperor, from the wild province of Yun-nan," said Candida.

"Candida is surely laughing at her pupil, for is it not said that this Li-Kong is chiefest of the rebels, who have so lately been disturbing my royal parent's repose?"

"Alas! my princess, that it should be necessary to pour words of grief into thy sweet ears," said Candida, sorrowfully.

"What words are these, Candida? What grief can come in such a place of repose? Truly you terrify without answering my question," said the princess, angrily.

"But that my sweet mistress alone possesses the ear of the Emperor, and may open it for the benefit of the starving millions of the empire, her friend and servant would not grieve her," replied the lady.

"Tell me, O Candida, if thou wouldst not vex thy mistress, what mean these words," said the princess, pettishly; adding, "Surely you would not protect the traitor Li-Kong."

"It is of that prince thy servant would speak," said the lady; adding, "Know then, O princess, that, angered at some refusal of thy royal father, the Prince Li-Kong, fled from the court, placed himself at the head of a robber army, and being joined by thousands of the starving people, among whom he made himself popular, took posession of two of the largest provinces, and caused himself to be proclaimed as Emperor, and took the title of Tien-Chun (He that obeys Heaven), persuading the people that he had been appointed by Heaven to deliver them from the cruelty of the Emperor and his ministers."

"Dared the dog say this? Surely my royal father is the parent of his people."

"Nay, O princess, for as it was the duty of my father, the great minister, so is it mine, at the risk of death, to speak the truth. Until within the last moon, the greater part of the empire was in the hands of robbers and assassins, justice was openly sold by

the mandarins to the highest bidder, the husbandmen of the hills and fields and the tradesmen in the streets were dying by thousands of starvation, while the Son of Heaven was shut up in his palaces intent upon nothing but his pleasures and the society of the bonzes."

"Candida, dear Candida, thou who art so truth-loving that thou darest even to rebuke thy Emperor, canst thou tell thy friend and mistress that while all is so calm, beautiful, and happy within these walls, there can be so much misery without?" said the princess, trembling with fear.

"Even worse, O dear princess, for while the imperial storehouses are groaning with grain, thousands of people are dying of starvation within the walls of Pekin," replied Candida.

"I dare not doubt thy words, O Candida, yet I will not believe that my great parent would keep close the public storehouses while his children were starving," said the princess.

"It is even worse, O princess, for the daily distribution of food has been withheld," said Candida.

With a vacant stare the princess gazed into the face of her friend for a moment, then with a flood of tears upon her cheeks, fell into her arms; but recovering her presence of mind, she said, "Truly this is a calamity; surely I have heard such things ever precede the downfall of dynasties; but I will to my father's presence, and dutifully implore him on my knees;" and she moved toward the palace as if to act upon her resolution, but Candida caught her in her arms, say-

ing, "It would not be seemly, O princess, nay, it would be useless, for the Prince Li-Kong now possesses the Emperor's confidence.

"What words are these, O Candida? Thou art indeed laughing at thy mistress, for didst thou not say the traitor was in open rebellion?"

"True, my princess, he was, till, for some vile purpose, he made his submission to Ten Thousand Years, who, as he brought the heads of some chiefs of the rebels, pardoned him, in the belief that his rebellion had been a trick, a pretence whereby he had the better subdued the other rebels."

With indignation in her heart at the traitor Li, and her eyes swimming with tears, she placed her hands affectionately in those of her friend—before, however, she could speak she shrieked with fright. The sin-fin had broken his cage and stood as erect as a man, clattering his teeth and grinning in her face, with his great paws upon her neck. The princess fainted; not so the Lady Candida for she boldly clutched hold of the brute, who, however, without relinquishing his grasp of the princess, caught the Lady Candida by her head-dress and hair, and dragged them both in the direction of the lake, looking savagely at the screaming attendants, who scampered off as fast as their legs would carry them; and so rapid were the movements of the brute, that he reached the verge of the water before Nicholas could thrust his sword into his hirsute side, a bit of a surprise that caused the beast to leave his hold of the ladies, when "scotched" but not killed, and catching sight of his

real enemy, he uttered a savage scream and sprang at him with extended claws, but so neat was the spring that the weapon of Nicholas passed through his heart, when he gave one last terrific leap and rolled over dead.

The fright, the horror of feeling themselves in the sin-fin's clutches, and the revulsion of feeling at the unexpected relief, made the ladies forget, as you may well imagine, the lesser terror of seeing a strange youth within the prohibited walls. As for Nicholas, he thought only of them both. However, seeing they had been more frightened than hurt, and that they were now regarding him with a mixed expression of gratitude, surprise, and even anger, for so great is the modesty of women, and such the force of the custom in China, that rescue from death itself was scarcely sufficient to suppress the instinctive anger they felt at the intrusion of a boy in so sacred a place; perceiving all this at a glance, Nicholas fell upon his knees, saying, "Pardon, O great princess, for thus thy yellow girdle betokens thee. Let the life of thy mean servant be the penalty for his unpardonable intrusion, and he will not regret it, since he has been the means of saving the daughter of his Emperor, and the Christian-protecting Lady Candida, from the fangs of a vile beast."

"Rise, O youth, for it is not seemly that thou shouldst kneel at the feet of her whose life thou hast saved, and say what chance hath brought thee hither," said the royal lady, smiling with sweet gratitude.

"Surely, O princess, chance can have no influence over the children of God, who must have sent thy servant hither as a manifest of his watchful care for those who obey his word and protect his worshipers," replied Nicholas earnestly.

"Then thou art of the Lord of heaven's religion. But who art thou, O my poor youth, who thus seekest certain death by thy presence here?" said Candida, looking tremulously around, for fear of the approach of any of the eunuchs of the palace.

"Let this, O princess, bespeak the reason of thy servant's intrusion, where even the daring Li-Kong cannot foil his purpose," replied Nicholas, falling upon his knees and presenting his father's letter to the princess, who handed it to Candida, who no sooner glanced at the characters upon the envelope than she said angrily, "This is from the rebel pirate, Chin-Chi-Loong."

"Should thy servant's tongue be torn from his mouth, he would say those words are false, lady. The noble chief is neither pirate nor rebel; if so, thy servant would not have risked his life to place that letter in the hands of the Son of Heaven," said Nicholas firmly.

"If thy words are true, youth——" but as the Lady Candida spoke, a body of armed eunuchs entered the garden, so, giving the letter back to Nicholas, she said, "Haste youth, for thy life;" but knowing the attempt would be useless, he stood his ground firmly.

"No, lady," said he; "thy servant came here to

place that letter in the hands of the Emperor.' Before he could say more the men had drawn around him.

"Tie the dog hand and foot," said the chief.

"Not so, O Lun-Yin," said the princess.

"Thy slave dare not disobey the laws, O illustrious daughter of the Mings," replied the chief, bowing to the earth.

"Then convey the youth to the presence of the Emperor, for he has treason to disclose, but let not his limbs be bound at the peril of your life, and we will answer to our great father," said the princess.

When the ladies withdrew toward the inner palace the eunuchs led Nicholas through the small gate into a spacious court, which was crowded with soldiers, bonzes and servants, in attendance upon the great lords, who were then in council with the Emperor. Passing through the crowd they entered a magnificent archway of veined marble into a vast court, across which ran a canal of water, so pellucid that shoals of gold and silver fish could be seen playing around the stems of the white-leaved lien-hoa at the bottom. Across this canal was thrown a bridge of glittering white marble, supported upon each bank by lions sculptured from the same material. From this bridge Nicholas could see that the whole court was surrounded with marble terraces, which led through small doorways into the imperial treasure rooms, which were full of precious metals, jewels, valuable furs, rare vases, and costly robes, and a variorum collection of silks, that had been presented

from the chief manufactories of the empire. Other rooms contained bows, arrows, saddles, and even specimens of the choicest teas to be found in China. Leaving the treasures they entered the great court of the princes of the blood, whose palaces shone with gilding, japan, and varnish, through which they passed by a small side-gate into the hippodrome, or horse-racing court, which was crowded with mandarins of arms and letters, of inferior rank, besides the state chairs, and horse guards belonging to the princes. As they entered the hippodrome they saw a group of war mandarins gathered around a person who was clamoring for something that the mandarins must have deemed very absurd, for although so near the inner palace, they laughed loudly. Perceiving, however, the chief of the eunuchs, they became suddenly grave, and bowed to the ground three times.

"How is this? Are the dogs tired of their lives, that they venture to make this unseemly uproar within the very hearing of the Son of Heaven himself?" said that officer angrily.

"Truly, the all-powerful Yin would risk his flowery existence, laughing at this paper tiger, who is mad enough to demand an audience with the Son of Heaven," replied one of the mandarins. Before, however, the chief of the eunuchs could reply, the person in question had thrown himself at his feet, crying, "Pardon, O mighty officer of the palace, thy slave, who seeks a master bereft of his senses, and who is now wandering about the palace in search of the Son of Heaven. May he vanquish his enemies."

"Thou, then, art the servant of this dog who has profaned the imperial gardens?" said the chief of the eunuchs; adding, before Nicholas could interfere for Chow, "Let the dog be taken to the prison, as he will doubtless be strangled with his master when the will of the Emperor is known."

"Then, in obedience to this command, the boy was hurried away, and Nicholas led forward to the court of the inner palace.

CHAPTER XXI.

ASSEMBLY OF THE GREAT PRINCES OF THE EMPIRE.

The audience-chamber of the Emperor was a vast square hall of great height. The ceiling was of pale green, sculptured in devices, and decorated with paintings, charged at intervals with the Emperor's crest in gold. The walls were smooth and without other ornament than the carved window frame, which was set with panes of richly painted paper. The roof was supported by rows of columns, elaborately sculptured and japanned, which rested upon a pavement of the rarest veined marble, of so high a polish that it reflected the whole interior.

In the centre stood a lofty alcove, above which, upon a drapery of yellow silk, were embossed in pale blue enamel the words "Ching Hoang," (Holy Emperor). Beneath, upon a dais, ascended by a flight of broad steps was a throne of frosted gold, surmounted and upheld by dragons of the same metal, but burnished, and whose claws rested upon a carpet of blue velvet, besprinkled with the same monsters in silver.

Opposite the throne upon a raised platform, were placed several vessels of the precious metals, filled with incense, which, as it burned, sent forth a delicious perfume, and candlesticks ingeniously wrought into the shape of animals.

From the throne to the end of the wall, ranged so as to form an alley, stood the great officers of state, attired in large flowing robes of silk, flounced with gold, and bearing on their breasts the insignia of their different dignities; those belonging to the military department wearing golden buttons on their caps and tigers or lions on their breasts, while the civil officers, who were of higher rank, wore birds in place of beasts. At the back of these mandarins were other officers, bearing umbrellas of silk brocade, fringed with gold; there were also many who wore the button of an inferior rank, and who wore large fans of silk, embroidered with gold; others with large standards, sprinkled with golden stars, dragons, the sun, and the moon in all its quarters, to represent the twenty-eight mansions of the heavens, and their conjunctions and oppositions with the sun, as they appear in the intersections of the circles, which the astronomers call the dragon's head and tail. Near the walls stood a number of mandarins of inferior rank, both civil and military, bearing maces, axes, hammers, and swords. Upon the steps of the throne stood the princes of the blood, attired in the costumes of their civil or military rank, the only tokens of their imperial blood, being the large yellow or red girdle, and the circle instead of the square in which the bird or beast is worn upon the breast.

The left hand being the place of honor in China, on that side of the throne stood the imperial but unfortu nate Prince, Yong-Li, a youth of fifteen years of age, near to whom stood the aged Woo, whose office, that

of a colao or censor, was at once the most dangerous and most popular in the empire, his duty being to check the great mandarins, and even the Emperor himself, in the wrong exercise of their authority. This officer may be termed the representative of tha public opinion in China which moulds its irresponsible despotism somewhat to the shape of a constitutional government. One step lower, in the full costume of tsong-tou (a great viceroy), stood the Prince Woo-san-Kwei. This prince was the son of the censor Woo, and one of the most remarkable men of his time. He was tall and stately, and, like the rest of the nobles of the Ming dynasty, wore his hair in long and luxuriant tresses; moreover, like his parent Woo, he wore the circle upon his breast, and around his waist the girdle of red, which betokened him to be of the second rank of the princes of the blood. Upon the opposite side of the throne, and one step nearer, as became his closer relationship to the monarch, stood the first prince of the yellow girdle, Li-Kong, a man whose influence upon those tempestuous times was as remarkable for bad as that of Woo-san-Kwei was for good; he was also a tang-tou.

Next this prince, in their robes of office, stood the colaos, or ministers of state, and with them an officer whose bird-embroidered robe and cap betokened him a mandarin of letters of the highest rank in the great college of Han-Lin. This officer was tutor to the heir to the throne, but in addition held an office so peculiar that I do not think you will accuse me of tediousness if I tell you something about it. He was the

chief historian of the empire, an appointment which, if carried out with similar integrity, would be creditable to other empires besides China.

"These historians," says a writer who resided within the walls of the palace thirty years, "consist of a certain number of men, who, for their learning and impartiality are purposely chosen for this office. Their business is to observe narrowly not only the actions but the words of the Emperor, which, without communication with the others, each must write upon a loose piece of paper, and put it through a chink into an office set apart for the purpose.

"In these papers both the Emperor's virtues and faults are set down with the same liberty and impartiality. 'Such a day,' say they, 'the Emperor's behavior was unseasonable and intemperate; he spoke after a manner which became not his dignity. The punishment which he inflicted on such an officer was rather the effect of his passion than the result of his justice. In such an affair, he stopped the sword of justice, and abrogated the just sentence of the magistrate.' Or else, 'The Emperor entered courageously into a war for the defence of his people and for the maintainance of the honor of his empire; and, notwithstanding the commendations given him by his flatterers, he was not puffed up, but behaved himself modestly, his words were tempered with all the sweetness and humility possible, which made him more loved and admired by his court than ever.'

"Such is the way in which they record down all that occurs; but that neither fear on the one side, nor

hope on the other, may bias men to give a partial record of the Emperor, the office wherein these papers are kept is never opened during the life of the sovereign, or while any of his family sit upon the throne. When, however, the imperial dignity passes into another family, all these loose memoirs are gathered together, compared, and a history composed, that either hands down the Emperor as an example to posterity, or exposes him to the censure and odium of the nation, if he has been negligent of his own duty and his people's good. Thus is it the interest of the Emperor to be circumspect, and cautious how he behaves himself during his reign."

With reference to the history of events and the progress of the people generally, it is the custom for each city to keep an exact record of every memorable event as it happens, its most remarkable places and inhabitants, good or bad; moreover, of their manners and customs; and although there are many who, by offering bribes to the governor, obtain honorable mention in these annals, upon the whole the accounts are considered to be tolerably accurate, for at the end of every forty years the mandarins of every city assemble and examine the accounts, and expunge what they deem unfit to remain recorded.

Theoretically, the will of the emperor is the only law; the lives, fortunes, and worldly happiness of his subjects depend upon its wildest caprice; but, in reality, it is only theoretically, for in the words of another great authority, who not only resided at the court of Pekin some thirty years, but absolutely held

office therein. "One would imagine that this unlimited power of the Emperor would often occasion very unfortunate events in the government, and indeed it sometimes hath, as nothing in this world is without its alloy of inconvenience, yet so many are the provisions and so wise the precautions which the laws have pescribed to prevent them, that a prince must be wholly insensible of his own reputation and even interest, as well as the public good, who continues long in the abuse of his authority; for if he hath any regard for his own reputation, there are three things which will prevail with him to govern by justice, not passion: first, the old laws, given from the foundation of the empire, have laid it down as a standing maxim, that kings are properly the fathers of their people, *and not masters placed upon the throne only to be served by slaves.* The words in italics contain a doctrine, by the way, that our first James strived so hard to inculcate, that it ultimately led to a revolution in England, not very dissimilar to that in China, of which I am now writing. Such having been the teaching of those law-givers, Confucius and others, who are to the present day venerated as deities in China, the Emperor's proudest title of honor has been in all ages Ta-fou" (that is, grandfather).

This theory of what the Emperor should be, is so deeply imprinted in the minds of the people and the mandarins, that, when they offer praises, whether deserved or not, it is based upon his presumed affection for his people. The teachers and philosophers continually set forth in their books that the state is but a

large family, and that he who knows how to govern the one is best capable of governing the other; so that, if the Emperor neglects, never so little, the practice of this maxim, he may be a great warrior, an able politician, a learned man, and yet meet with neither love nor esteem from his people. Indeed, they value him only as they believe he is, or is not, a father to them.

Thus, as I have shown you, not only the censor but, in a lesser degree, every mandarin may tell the Emperor of his faults, provided it be in a manner agreeable to that veneration and profound respect which is due to his office. The manner, however, in which this is done, is somewhat roundabout. The mandarin who perceives any thing in the Emperor's conduct contrary to the maxims laid down in the sacred books, draws up a request, in which, after having set forth the respect which he bears toward his majesty, he most humbly prays that he will please to reflect upon the ancient laws and good examples of his great predecessors. This request lies upon a a table among many other petitions, which are daily presented and which the Emperor is obliged to read; and if he does not change his conduct, the petition is repeated again and again till the end has been gained, or the mandarin himself punished for his presumption. The latter, however, never happens, except with bad and tyrannical Emperors.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOY PRINCE AND THE RIVAL GENERALS.

THUS were the great princes and lords of China awaiting the coming of their imperial master, and with something like impatience, for often, of late, had his majesty kept them waiting for hours, and then granted no audience at all. Such, however, was not to be the case then, for soon the sounds of wind instruments were heard, pages and eunuchs entered from the door which led to the imperial apartment, followed by the favorite body attendants of the sovereign, then the Emperor himself;—and the mandarins in the body of the hall, and the lords upon the steps of the throne, bent their heads till their foreheads touched the floors, in which position they remained, awaiting the command of the monarch to arise. Wey-t-song, the last of the Ming Emperors, was of middle height and spare figure, at least for a Chinese, whose notion of manly beauty consists of large and bulky form; he was attired in a robe of yellow silk, embroiderered with five-clawed dragons, a necklace of costly pearls, and a golden girdle fastened around his waist by a jeweled clasp; his high cap or crown of purple satin, sparkled with jewels, and was decorated with the peacock's feather, which fell upon

his long black hair; his boots were of purple satin, and fitted tightly to the shape of the feet; as for his hands, they were hidden beneath the folds of his robe.

When the Emperor had seated himself upon the throne, a graceful movement with his ample sleeves gave the sign for the kneeling courtiers to arise, and they stood with their arms straightened and eyes turned upon the ground, pretending that the sight of so much majesty was too dazzling for their vision.

Thus, for a time, all was silent, till the censor Woo, falling upon his knees, and holding above his head his silver seal of office, gravely said, "Since our lord has vouchsafed us his heavenly audience, and the door of the imperial apartments is no longer disfigured by the audience-denying tablet, it is the duty of the meanest of his slaves to open his lips, even at the risk of his life."

"Rise, thou venerable noble, for it is not seemly that one who is at age's extremity should kneel, even before the Emperor. Rise, noble Woo, for thy years demand that thy petition should be heard standing," said Wey-t-song, aiding the aged man to his feet.

"Alas! dread prince, thy servant's days have been too long, for he has lived to see a successor of the great Emperors, Yu and Yaou, forget that Heaven had made him the father of his people," said Woo, sadly.

"What words are these? Surely the noble Woo presumes upon his age, for has it not been wisely said that the will of the Emperor is omnipotent?"

"It is written in the sacred books, O prince, that it is equally criminal in the Emperor and the subject to violate the laws. Truly the life of the minister is the property of his sovereign, but the dignity of his office belongs to the country, which is even now torn into shreds by maladministration," replied the firm old noble; adding, "For when the Emperor becomes negligent of his duty, and sinks into a lover of luxury and ease, the spirit of indolence must pervade the occupant of every mandrinate; so, at the present time, every viceroy and governor has grown to think himself the sovereign, instead of the father and teacher of his province; each minister, in defiance of the law, sells places to those unfit to occupy them; and thus the people, being oppressed, have arisen in rebellion over the empire, to the advantage of rogues and thieves, who await but the finding of some bold bad man to enable them to change, O prince, thy very dynasty. Yet surely this is not without cause, for hath it not been asked, 'Why hath Heaven placed the Emperor upon the throne, if not to be our parent?' and therefore he ought not to make himself feared, but in proportion as he deserves to be loved for his goodness and virtue; therefore, at the risk of his life, the censor dares tell his dread sovereign that while the people are suffering, the Emperor should forget his pleasures, fast in his palace, punish the offending mandarins, remit the taxes of the suffering provinces, and employ his whole thoughts in alleviating their misfortunes. Like the Emperors of old, he should lament night and day till the evils are remedied. Such

are the words of the aged Woo, who hath lived through the reigns of six of thy illustrious predecessors, and they have been called forth, O dread prince, by thy neglect of the petitions which he has laid upon the imperial table. If thy slave offendeth, O prince, let his worthless head be the penalty, for he has done his duty; and the old noble again fell at the feet of Wey-t-song, who, giving way to a paroxysm of passion, rose, and, placing his hand upon the hilt of his sabre, exclaimed, "What words are these old man? Is the Emperor a slave that thou darest so far?" But, despot and even cruel as he was, the age and daring of the old noble had excited in the eyes of the surrounding courtiers such unmistakable gleams of satisfaction, that, really afraid of proceeding to extremities, he fell back upon his throne, saying, "Arise, noble Woo, and that in the licence of thy office thou hast uttered words of wind against thy Emperor, the rebel-subduing General Li-Kong will testify."

Upon this, the Prince Li-Kong, falling upon his knees, said, "Truly, O august and sovereign Emperor, the age of the noble Woo must have diminished his eye-balls, or he would have seen in the Imperial Gazette that the Emperor, our father, having heard of the rebellion in the provinces, had despatched his mean servant, myself, with a correcting army, and that thy unworthy relation had secured a lasting internal peace."

"And thy reward, prince?" said the Emperor?"

"The generalship of the home armies, and the favor of my great sovereign, who will not open his heavenly

ears to the words of these rogues, who accuse thy servant and mean relation of ingratitude and treason."

"This reminds us that the reward is inadequate to thy services, most princely Li. Let it therefore be proclaimed throughout the empire that the grateful Wey-t-song is about to bestow upon the kingdom-soothing Prince Li-Kong the hand of his only daughter in marriage," said the Emperor.

But before the prince could thank the Emperor, the General Woo-san-Kwei fell upon his knees before the throne, saying, "The humblest but most devoted of thy servants would dare to claim the heavenly ears of his most august prince."

"If the barbarian-subduing general has aught to counsel let him open his lips."

"Then, truly, O dread Emperor, it must be at the risk of my life; for so many moons has thy servant been engaged in defending the frontiers of the empire against the Tartar barbarians, that he has lost the submissive tones fitted to thy heavenly ears," said Woo-san-Kwei.

"Let the general open his lips, for although his words may be more warlike, they cannot be rebellious, like those of his noble parent."

"The words of the noble Woo flowed from his heart, O prince, and were approved by his son, who now, as in duty bound, would counsel his sovereign, that, although the services of the rebel-exterminating general have been great, his reward has been greater than his merits, for does he not hold the golden seals of the highest military command? As for the prin-

cess, she is the daughter of the empire, and too exalted to be bestowed upon the noble Li-Kong. Remember O Emperor, it will be the duty of the historians to record that the Emperor Wey-t-song, instead of commanding, had been weak enough to purchase the services of a powerful lord, tainted with treason, with the only daughter of his house; setting aside the wise custom of his ancestors, who bestowed their daughters upon tributary kings, whereby alliances were formed for the prosperity of the empire," said the Prince Woo-san-Kwei; adding, "At the risk of his life has thy servant spoken, O prince, for fear that thy too great generosity may smear thy page in history."

"Scarcely dissembling his enmity, Li-Kong spoke, "Truly my sovereign is too generous to permit the envy of his servant's enemies to have weight in his dragon ears."

"The kingdom-soothing general speaks well, for who is this turbulent lord, and what the value of his services, that he dares be so rebellious?" said the Emperor; adding, angrily, "Let the dog be arrested; when the young prince threw himself before the throne, and said—

"Let my illustrious parent not so far forget his royal dignity as to vent his anger upon the honest Woo-san-Kwei, who has saved the kingdom from the Tartars, and offered his counsel only by right of his high rank. No, O my sovereign, rather let the hand of my dear sister be withheld until the Prince Li has further proved his merits, by showing to his Emperor that

he has really performed those wonderful feats of conquest which he now boasts, but all others deny."

At this speech a half-suppressed murmur of approbation rang through the hall, which brought a heavy frown upon the forehead of Wey-t-song. As, however, he really feared a quarrel with either of these powerful princes, he said, "Though young, the words of the Prince Yong-Li are wise, for it is not fitting that our people should be feasting and rejoicing at the marriage of our daughter, while it is not certain that the rebels are-subdued, and the Tartars upon the frontiers. It is, therefore our will that our daughter's hand be withheld till entire peace be restored."

Then the whole court bowed to the ground three times in submision to the imperial will, and the Emperor moved the sleeves of his robe, as a token that the audience was at an end, when the chief of the eunuchs ran quickly up the avenue formed by the court, till he reached about half way, when he stood with his head erect and his arms by his side for a minute, then having performed the usual prostrations, he ran to the foot of the throne, where he threw himself upon his knees.

"Is the slave mad, that he dares intrude in this our highest council-chamber?" said the Emperor.

"The life of the slave is in the hands of his master, yet must he perform his duty. Treason is within the very walls, O my sovereign."

At the word treason the blood of Taitsou became weak as water, for the royal face became livid

with fear. He grasped his sabre, saying, "What says the slave?"

"Two boys, O dread sovereign, have been found within the prohibited wall; one even within the sacred precincts of the imperial gardens."

At the words two boys there was a half-suppressed titter, probably at the little cause the Emperor had had to fear; but at the mention of the garden of the inner palace, the aged Woo said, "Surely, O great sovereign, the worthy eunuch has overstepped his duty; these young slaves should have been handed over to the police tribunals."

"The noble Woo is right," replied the Emperor. "What has the dog of a eunuch to say for intruding in our presence with such matters?"

"The will of the Emperor is the life-blood of the meanest of his slaves, and but little else is that of the princess in whose presence one of the dogs was found, and at whose command he is brought hither," replied the trembling eunuch.

"The profane slave!" muttered the surrounding mandarins, clutching the hilts of their swords.

"The will of our beloved daughter is law; let the audacious slave be brought before us," said the Emperor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AUDIENCE WITH THE SON OF HEAVEN.—NICHOLAS ACCUSES A GREAT PRINCE OF TREASON.

Nicholas was led into the hall between two inferior mandarins, and had no sooner prostrated himself at the foot of the throne, than the Prince Li-Kong said, "Surely the eyes of the Emperor of the earth are too holy to be darkened by such mean dogs as this. Let the common executioner deal with him, for their can be no doubt of his guilt."

"Stop not the fountain of justice at its very source, O my sovereign, for when was it that a good king refused to listen to the meanest of his slaves?" said Woo; but before the Emperor could reply, one of the great officers of the palace ran up to the steps of the throne, performed the prostrations, and being commanded to speak,

"The great and beautiful princess, thy daughter, begs an audience of her illustrious father," said the officer.

The Emperor having signified his assent, the princess, accompanied by the Lady Candida, and both veiled, knelt before the Emperor, who, lifting her from her kneeling position, said affectionately, "Truly my daughter must have matter of weighty import

upon her lips, thus to break through the delicacy of her sex and rank."

"Pardon, great prince, if thy daughter has forgotten what is due either to her parent or her sex, but it is a common saying, 'that those who forget favors conferred upon them are unfit to live,' and therefore thy daughter would protect the life of one who saved her from a cruel death," said the princess.

"Has the safety of the pearl of my life been endangered?" said the Emperor, trembling at the possibility of such a catastrophe, and placing his hands upon her head; adding, "What words are these, my daughter, for is not the empire crowded with those who would deem happiness if it were to save their princess from danger."

"Not one of whom could have saved her from the savage sin-fin, who, having escaped from his cage, had seized her, when yonder bold youth slew the beast."

The Lady Candida then described the whole scene in the gardens to the Emperor, who forgetful of the desecration of the place by the profane feet of Nicholas, nay, of every thing but the escape of his beloved child from a fearful death, commanded the release of Nicholas; but again the general Li-Kong stepped forward.

"It is true," said he, "that the beautiful and illustrious princess has been saved from great peril, and the whole empire will rejoice; yet it is a maxim, that the laws should be enforced even upon the imperial kindred.' Moreover, my sovereign, in his gen-

erosity, forgets that the cage of the beast could not have opened itself, and that the slave merits death for being in the garden."

"Though not generous, the words of the rebel-exterminating general are just," replied the weak prince; adding, to Nicholas, sternly, "What says the boy; what traitorous errand brought him within the sacred gardens of our palace?"

"The life of the slave belongs to the master. The personal safety of thy servant, O great prince, was nothing when he desired to place in thy hands a letter of the greatest moment, from one far greater than the lords around thy throne."

"These are wild words, O youth; for know you not that it was the duty of our chief colao to receive thy letter? said the Emperor, interrupting.

"Mean as is thy servant, O prince, he knew that treason was within the palace, and that the letter would never reach thy royal hands; therefore, that it should not fail to do so, I sought the imperial gardens with the daring hope of meeting thy royal daughter, knowing that if my life were sacrificed, my mission would be fulfilled," said Nicholas; adding, "Such has been the crime, and the criminal awaits his punishment."

"This letter," said the Emperor.

"Is here, great prince," and Nicholas presented the document to Wey-t-song, who tore open the seals, and for some minutes became lost in the perusal of its contents, after which, to the surprise of the court, he placed it beneath his vest, saying, "This

letter must be for the consideration of our inner council. Youth, thy honesty and loyalty are beyond doubt, and we permit thee to name thy own reward."

"Thy slave, O prince, would ask one so great, that the greatest of thy tributaries would seek it upon his knees," was the reply, to the astonishment of the lords, who expected it would be nothing less than the hand of the princess. "No less, indeed, than a private audience," added Nicholas, which, with a smile at this novel and modest request, the Emperor granted.

"May this not be a trap, O my prince, to beguile thy person within reach of the assassin's dagger?" said the artful but baffled Li-Kong.

"The dagger to be feared by thy sovereign, base prince, is beneath thine own vest," said Nicholas.

"Dares the dog so far?" said the exasperated Li-Kong.

"Forget not thy dignity, O noble Li," said Woo-san-Kwei, touching that prince upon the shoulder, and adding, "Yet it is but just that such an assertion, made in the very presence of the Emperor, should be verified."

The Emperor came to the rescue, saying, "Open thy lips, youth, for, well as we think of thy honesty, thou hast uttered words against the noblest of our yellow girdles, which as they are true or false merit reward or punishment."

Thus challenged Nicholas fell upon his knees, and related his adventure at the palace of retirement, declaring that the two men were plotting the dethrone-

ment of the Emperor, and that the chief of the two was the Prince Li-Kong himself. At this bold and circumstantial accusation, the young Prince Yong-Li and the great lords on the steps of the throne, placed their hands upon their swords, and alternately glancing at Li-Kong and Nicholas, awaited the command of the Emperor to seize either accuser or accused. For an instant the lips of Li-Kong quivered with fear or rage, but, recovering his equanimity, he gave a signal with his hand, when a large body of military mandarins came around him, and fell upon their knees before the Emperor, when Li said, "Are the services of thy servant so soon forgotten, have the rebels been no sooner chastised, and peace restored within the empire, that the exterminator and his officers should be as mice before the words of this less than a dog? O my sovereign! let these officers be questioned, and they will prove that on the night of which the dog speaks, their general was engaged in discovering a new conspiracy among the Fan-Kwi priests."

"What words are these, O prince?" said the Emperor, whose alarm had been artfully turned in another direction. "Have we not honored these priests, even to making their chief the president of our high board of mathematics?"

"Yet such is the ingratitude of the barbarians, O my Emperor, that, in league with the outer barbarians, they seek to overthrow the empire."

"Let my guards instantly secure every villain priest within the walls of the city," said the terrified Emperor.

"Thy slaves have been diligent, and thy command anticipated, O Emperor; the miserable chief of the mathematics and his brethren have been carried before the three tribunals, their guilt proved, and most mercifully adjudged to be strangled; the sentence but awaits the vermilion pencil of the Emperor," said Li-Kong.

"The judges have failed in the duties of their office by so mild a sentence, for which let them all be degraded three degrees of rank, and the priests be cut into ten thousand pieces," said the Emperor.

"If the crime be proved, the sentence is light; if not, terrible must be thy remorse, O my sovereign, for the learned father's services have been great. Surely, then, thy wisdom alone should seek to discover the guilt or innocence of this enormous culprit, or much-injured priest," said Woo.

"The words of the venerable Woo, O my royal father, are worthy of his years and the imperial dignity; let not thy indignation rather than thy justice adjudge this priest, but command that he be brought before thee," said the young prince, earnestly.

"Thy words are but reasonable, my son; we will examine the Christian dog ourselves," said the Emperor. When, at a signal, the aged missionary, Adam Schaal, was brought before the throne, so laden with iron chains that his form was bent to the shape of a bow; still, with his long white hair and beard, and the unflinching, piercing blue eye of his German race, he looked, as he was, a willing martyr for the cause of his Saviour.

At the sight of his old favorite thus humiliated, even the Emperor melted with pity and doubt as to his guilt. "Can it be under heaven," said he, "that so holy a body should contain so vile a heart? Have we not protected and fostered thee and thy companions in the heart of our empire, giving thee permission to build thy temples and even to convert the people to thy religion; nay, moreover, raised thee to the first rank among the learned? Canst thou answer, thou villainous old man?"

"It is even these favors, O mighty Emperor, that have raised the envy of the enemies of Christ, who, jealous of the success of thy servant's cause, seek to destroy him, that they may triumph over his religion; and if their malice should prevail, the Christian priest will die blessing the great Emperor who enabled him to do so much good."

"What says the accuser to these words?" said the Emperor, sternly, more than half believing in the father's innocence.

"Stand forth, O Hung," said Li-Kong; when a mandarin of the second degree fell before the throne and held above his head some medals, a book, and a chaplet of beads, saying, "Are not these proofs of the old rogue's guilt?"

"They are, O my sovereign, the mysterious symbols and secret marks used by the initiated in the great conspiracy, which is now insidiously spreading throughout the empire, and known to each other."

"How! what dog's words are these, thou ignorant slave? Dost thou not know that these are the symbols

of the Lord of heaven's religion?" replied the Emperor, who, at the beginning of his reign, having befriended the missionaries, and made himself master of the mysteries and symbols of their religion, was far beyond most of his nobles in intelligence.

"It is so alleged, O dread sovereign, by the villains, for their own vile ends, and should it be even so, the Son of Heaven can not doubt this proof of guilt," replied the mandarin, placing a letter in the Emperor's hands.

For some time there was a dread silence; when, however, the Emperor had perused the document, his eye sparkled with rage, and he exclaimed, "Truly the proof is overwhelming, and it is to the viceroy of Quang-Tung the Emperor owes the discovery of this villainy. Bring hither the petition of the criminal tribunal for the villain's execution. Moreover, let it go forth through the earth that every Christian dog be exterminated;" and the court having prostrated themselves three times in token of obedience, one of the colaos presented the petition or sentence to the Emperor, which as he was about to confirm, by affixing the signature of the vermilion pencil, Nicholas threw himself at the foot of the throne, crying at the risk of his life, "O great Emperor, thy slave dares proclaim the extreme villainy of the great viceroy of Quang-Tung, whose jealousy and envy of the favors his royal master has bestowed upon the good father has caused him to seek his life."

"Is the boy pirate mad that he dares so insolently presume upon his small services, as to interrupt the course of justice?" exclaimed the angry Emperor.

Taking from his vest the letter his father had given him for Father Adam, Nicholas said, boldly, "This letter, O great sovereign, thy servant was commanded by his parent to place in the hands of the priest Adam Should it contain treason, the Emperor can punish on the spot, for both the priest and the son of the writer are in his hands. Should it be otherwise, his royal generosity will know how to reward."

No less surprised than appeased by the boy's vehemence, Wey-t-song commanded the censor Woo to proclaim aloud its contents, to which the nobles, as they were friends or enemies of the priests of Christ, listened with divided attention. The document was lengthy and tedious, and directed by Chin-Chi-Loong, the merchant of the south, to his illustrious teacher and religious parent, the Father Adam Schaal, warning him that the viceroy of Quang-Tung, in conjunction with the bonzes of the court, whom he had bribed at Pekin, had organized such a scheme that it could not fail to appear clear that the Christian priests in China were at the head of a conspiracy to dethrone the Emperor, at whose feet he advised the Father Adam immediately to prostrate himself and demand an investigation, promising speedily to send proofs of the viceroy's villainy to Pekin.

"The wickedness of this viceroy must be great, O my sovereign," said Woo, when he had concluded.

"Truly the great father of the empire will not believe the miserable charge of a wretched pirate against one of his highest officers," said Li-Kong savagely; but making an angry motion to the prince

for silence, the Emperor said, "What says the priest?"

"Truth, O great sovereign, is deeply emeshed in falsehood, that time alone can unravel; yet, had that letter reached thy servant's hands, his imperial master would have been saved an act of injustice; of, not receiving the great merchant's warning, the cruel viceroy succeeded, the storm of persecution burst over Hang-tcheou-fou, the churches of Christ were destroyed, and their priests loaded with chains whipped, tortured upon the rack, and otherwise degraded, it being only by the providence of the Almighty that thy servant was enabled to escape and reach Pekin in safety—where, alas! the persecution followed, and burst out with redoubled fury; thy servant, the head of his Church, being the first to feel and glory that he was the first to suffer for the cause of Christ."

"Can these words be true, O Woo? Has such villainy taken place in the land?" said the Emperor.

"Such things, O great prince, have been done in thy holy name by roguish ministers, who (*may I be pardoned for my boldness*) have taken advantage of the luxurious retirement of their Emperor to serve their own vile ends," replied Woo.

"Then be it the care of the upright censor to see that these miserable mandarins, who have so traitorously brought their Emperor's name into contempt and hatred, be exterminated with their whole families," said Wey-t-song, who was as impulsive for good as for bad.

"Surely my great father may be upon the brink of

great injustice; he may be sacrificing the lives of many devoted servants. It would be but justice that accusers and accused should be confined till the matter is sifted, and the truth discovered," said the young prince.

"The prince, our heir, has wisdom beyond his years; his words are good, and shall be followed," said the Emperor. At which there was an indecorous murmur of satisfaction, which was, however, instantly suppressed by the Emperor making the signal with his sleeves, that the audience was at an end.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NICHOLAS UNVEILS A REBEL CHIEF, AND OBTAINS A TITLE.

When Nicholas arose the following morning, his first care was for the safety of Chow, whom he discovered to be still in the custody of the criminal tribunal, where by the laws, he would be kept till the will of the chief colao became known. Feeling, however, satisfied that the boy would meet with no harm, now that he himself was in such high favor, he prepared for the promised private audience; and scarcely had he donned the state habiliments, which had been supplied to him by the chamberlain, than he received the imperial summons, and having been conducted through a series of large courts, he was shown into the innermost apartment of the palace, where in deep thought over a letter, sat the Emperor; upon the left (the place of honor) stood the young prince; upon his right, the aged Woo.

Having complied with the court etiquette by running quickly up the apartment, throwing himself on his knees, and performing the kow-tow, the Emperor commanded him to arise, and, placing his hand upon the letter, said, "The noble youth, then, is the son of the daring writer of these terrible charac-

ters, which declare most boldly that the noblest of our generals and relations is a traitor and rebel."

"The life of thy servant, O great prince, is at the will of his sovereign if those characters are not as truthful as the sacred books themselves," replied Nicholas.

"We dare not doubt them, youth, if these other characters are not forged by some villain," said the Emperor, placing a letter in the hands of Woo; adding, "Let the venerable Woo, who knoweth all things, declare the pencil that portrayed them."

Falling upon his knees and taking the letter, the aged man said, "Truly, O prince, these characters are from the hand of the General Li-Kong, whose treason is indeed stupendous, for he offers the supreme command of the four seas, and the sovereignty of the barbarous island of Formosa, to the merchant pirate, providing that sea chief will, with his multitudinous ships and great wealth, aid him (may the sound of the words not deprive me of reason) in subverting the dynasty of his holy Emperor. The crime, O my sovereign, is too huge to be conceived, and its author should be hewn into ten thousand pieces. Yet the eyes, nay, the very reason of thy aged servant, may be failing him, therefore it behoves us to have greater proof that these characters are not forged; for, though great is the cunning of villainy, surely so great a crime cannot exist beneath heaven."

"The words of the aged noble are magnanimous, for surely the Prince Li-Kong is the enemy of him and his; yet, though magnanimity is taught by the sacred

books, it must not endanger the life of our great sovereign and father," said the Prince Yong-Li; adding "Surely Li-Kong is famous for his vileness; his character is known to us all, yet if greater proof be wanting, let it be sought from the lips of this noble youth, whose life will be the penalty of so false an accusation."

"It would ill become so mean a person to traduce so great a general as the Prince Li-Kong, yet the safety of his sovereign must unseal his lips. Know, then, dread Emperor, that the General Li-Kong is at this very moment plotting thy ruin," said Nicholas, who then gave in detail the conversation he had heard at the palace of retirement, which the Emperor had no sooner heard than he said hastily, "Convey our command, O noble Woo, to the general thy son, to search for this traitor, and bring him in chains before us."

"Thy servant is unfortunate, for this is not possible, my sovereign. The brave Woo-san-Kwei, knowing his duty too well to remain in idleness at Pekin, while the Tartar-barbarians were harassing his army like hungry wolves,—truly the body was of little use without the head,—departed for his command after the council yesterday," replied Woo.

"How!" said the Emperor passionately; dared the general take his departure without an audience of leave."

"Let not thy wrath, O great sovereign fall upon the head of thy faithful servant, who presumed so far because his Emperor has, of late, foregone the

salutary ceremonies laid down by his ancestors," said the aged minister.

Angry at this rebuke yet feeling its truthfulness, the weak prince despairingly threw himself backward in his chair, when the young prince said "Surely the throne should be defended by its heir Thy son, O my Emperor and parent, will depart with the guards of the palace and bring this arch-traitor to his father's feet;" and not receiving a denial, the prince respectfully took his leave, when, having recovered his equanimity, the Emperor again took up Chin-Chi-Loong's letter.

"Truly, boy," said his majesty, "this daring pirate, thy father, knows more than the Emperor or his ministers. How know we that he is not as great a traitor as the prince he denounces, for surely by commerce alone he could not have obtained this wealth of ships, men, and money, which, like a king, he so insolently offers to his sovereign and master?'

"Truly, O great Emperor, if my illustrious parent were a traitor, he would not have placed the life of his only son, thy mean servant, in so great a danger," said Nicholas.

"The words of the youth, O prince, are as true as his deeds are brave," said Woo; adding, "Let then thy slave pray that the sunshine of the Emperor's favor may fall upon his race; for, fearing that the intentions of this great merchant were treasonous, I have long caused his actions to be watched and his ships to be harassed by the sea mandarins; but indeed with little use, for the noble Chin-Chi-Loong overcame

them all, to the disgrace of the board of arms of thy empire.

"How! did the slave pirate dare to overcome our sea tigers? said the Emperor in a rage.

"He has presumed, O prince to chastise traitors who wielded thy royal commission but for their own purposes, which, if a crime, he now offers to amend by sending his only son to beg that he may receive an order, signed by the vermilion pencil, to command that great fleet in his sovereign's name alone. The powerful pirate, for whose head the Emperor's ministers have offered great rewards, now places himself and his fortune at the disposal of the Son of Heaven," said Nicholas.

So great an offer having restored the Emperor to a better humor, he said, "It is a presumptuous request, yet loyal, if this bold man can give us a guarantee that he intends not playing us false."

"That guarantee is the life of thy servant, his only son, O my prince," replied Nicholas.

"These words are good and loyal, O my Emperor; for surely if this bold merchant hath sought wealth and power for his descendants, lo! he places his heir in thy hands," said Woo.

"The words of the aged Woo are wise and far-seeing. We grant this bold man's petition, and should he help us to root out from the land this growing rebellion we will secure to him the island promised by the villain Li-Kong. As for thyself, brave youth, to whom we are so greatly indebted, we grant thee the title of Princess-defending Tiger of War, and

appoint thee to a command in the guards of the palace; and, moreover, will keep thee in our favor, of which this shall be a token," said the Emperor, taking from his girdle an embroidered purse, and handing it to Nicholas, who fell reverently upon his knees and held his hands above his head to receive the present.

At that moment the Prince Yong-Li entered, threw himself at the foot of the throne, and said, "Thy son, O my sovereign, is deserving of punishment, for the traitor has escaped."

"Escaped!" repeated the Emperor, bitterly.

"Truly so, my father; no sooner did the council of yesterday disperse, than, fearing the discovery of his guilt, he assembled his officers and guards and quitted the city."

"Let the fleetest of our horsemen follow immediately," added the Emperor.

"It would be in vain, my father, for ere they can overtake him the traitor will be in the midst of his own troops and province," replied the prince.

"It would be wise to have the gates closely guarded and the defences of the city examined," said Woo.

"The villain dares not carry his treason so far as to invade our capital," replied Wey-t-song.

"Let not the generous nature of my prince carry him too far, for by insidious arts and treacherous gifts this Li-Kong has gained the hearts of the people of the provinces, and is vile enough to attempt the greatest of crimes," said the minister."

"By the tombs of our ancestors, the venerable noble is wise, and we should be prepared for the vilest of crimes. Let the barbarian-subduing General Woo-san-Kwei and his army be recalled from Leao-Tung."

"And so exchange a small traitor for the Tartar king, who, though a barbarian, is brave and powerful; rather let my royal father call around him in council the doctors of war and the ablest of his generals, who from the military books will doubtless find sure means of defending the city," said the prince; adding; "Then, O my sovereign parent, let the army be assembled, and permit thy son and this noble youth to meet the rebel on his way. Let this be so, my Emperor, and thy son will bring the traitor's head to thy feet, or be himself brought there upon his own shield."

"Thy heart is brave, but thy years too few, O my son, for so great a trust," replied the Emperor.

"At my years the illustrious Tait-Sou, the founder of our race, planted the first seeds of his glory in the field,' said the young prince, warmly.

"The royal prince, thy chosen heir, is both wise and brave, my sovereign, for his name and rank will be a banner, around which the loyal will flock as plentifully as locusts, while his youth and bravery will shame the rebels into submission," said the censor.

"The counsel of the venerable Woo is bold," said the Emperor; adding; "After the council of war my son shall seek to emulate the bravery of his ancestors."

"The tongue of thy son is too feeble to speak his thanks, my sovereign," exclaimed the impetuous prince, falling upon his knees.

CHAPTER XXV.

NICHOLAS AND THE PRINCE HAVE AN ADVENTURE AND SAVE THE LIFE OF CHOW.

THE morning after the audience Nicholas wrote to his father a detailed account of his adventures, and the disgrace and danger of the great Christian father, who, he assured him, would be destroyed, if proofs of his innocence were not speedily produced. When he had placed the letter in the hands of the flying-horse, or court messenger, who was about to start with the imperial cang-ho, he went in search of Chow, and, to his surprise, found the boy had been released under an order signed by Li-Kong, immediately before his abrupt departure. This, however, but puzzled him the more, for surely had the boy been released he would have sought out his master and friend. Then he began to fear that Chow had been decoyed away by some of the many designing traitors he more than suspected to be hovering about the palace, for the purpose of finding from the servant the history of the master. He sat for some time pondering what to do, and at length resolved upon searching through the whole city. With this determination he arose to depart, when he heard the trampling of footsteps, and the chief officer of the imperial prince entered the apart-

ment, followed by four men, carrying a litter, which they placed upon the ground.

"The son of the great Emperor (may he live ten thousand years) sends the noble youth a royal robe, and arms, in token of his amity and brotherhood," said the officer, bowing to the ground.

At the name of the prince, Nicholas performed the ko-tow, and ordered an incense table to be brought, that he might receive the royal message with befitting respect. The officer, however, added, "Further, O noble stranger, that all men may know his gratitude for the safety of his beloved sister, the great prince commands that the ceremony of the incense may be dispensed with, for the son of the Son of Heaven holds the noble youth as his brother in love as well as arms. Moreover, that he may prove his sincerity, the prince will wave his illustrious rank and visit the preserver of the princess his sister." So saying the eunuch withdrew.

The present consisted of a complete military equipment befitting his new rank:—the war cap or helmet, a robe, embossed with plates of gold, both for ornament and protection, boots of rich costly leather, sword, shield, bow, and quiver of arrows, each of which bore the imperial crest, the five-clawed dragon. Delighted more with the gift than its costliness, Nicholas did not stay to examine the present, for fear the prince might speedily arrive; and he was right, for he had scarcely finished attiring himself in his new uniform before Yong-Li, unannounced, entered the room.

In an instant Nicholas threw himself at his feet, and began to pour forth his gratitude, but, taking his hand, the prince said, "Arise, these are not times for ceremonies between brothers, banded together in so holy a cause; the sacred books themselves intended them alone for times of peace and luxury."

"May those times soon return, O my prince," said Nicholas.

"May my brother's wish be realised; but to obtain peace we must earn it by the sword," replied the prince; adding, gloomily, "I come from the board of generals and doctors of war."

"Upon what has their wisdom determined, O prince?"

"Nothing—they are dogs, traitors all; each general of a section declared the walls to be impassable by an enemy, and that the troops were numerous, well exercised, and prepared for a sudden attack," said the prince.

"These are the words of indolent cowards or designing traitors, but your royal father the Emperor——"

"Was present," said the prince; but, alas! so loves his ease and the counsel of his bonzes, that he gave a ready ear to their reports, nay, promoted them all one step for their vigilance."

"Surely my prince lifted his voice in council?" said Nicholas.

"My brother, yes; but it was as the sound of a zephyr amidst the roarings of a hurricane; that of a youth among the aged and did but cause his

majesty to forbid my seeking the rebel Li-Kong in the field."

"Then, my prince, our farther-seeing eye balls must be used for the benefit of the blind," said Nicholas.

"Thus it is that I seek thy companionship in a journey round the walls, when, if I find them as I expect, woe be to the indolent cowards who dare deceive their Emperor, said the prince.

Nicholas then followed them to the courtyard, where they found awaiting them a squadron of the body guard with two richly caparisoned horses, one of which Yong-Li presented to Nicholas, and they proceeded upon their journey amidst the lavish adorations of thousands, who bowed to the earth as they rode through the streets.

"If my prince would truly see the manner in which the officers and soldiers perform their duties, would it not be wise for him to proceed in a chair and with the attendants only of a mandarin of the third order?" said Nicholas.

"Thy words are good," replied the prince, ordering the soldiers to stop at the house of a mandarin, who, having formerly been his military tutor, he knew would keep his rank concealed. Shortly afterward they were met by some soldiers who were conveying several malefactors to the place of execution. Seeing the prince, the soldiers and prisoners knelt with their faces to the ground till he had passed. No sooner, however, had he passed the unhappy men than the son of the Emperor, with tears in his eyes, said,

"How unhappy is the lot of a prince, to witness such a sight as that!"

"Surely, my prince, the rogues deserve their punishment, the law awards, and the safety of the state demands it," said Nicholas.

"Truly, I weep not, my brother, at the punishment of these men, for without rewards and punish ments the good are not encouraged, and the wicked are not restrained; moreover, chastisement is as necessary to the government of a kingdom, as bread is for the sustenance of the people. But I weep because my time is not so happy as that of old when the virtues of the prince served as a bridle to the people, and his example was sufficient to restrain the vices of his subjects without other chastisement."

The warlike nature and education of Nicholas not permitting him to sympathize with the kind-hearted Yong-Li, he maintained a respectful silence, not however, without a fear for the fate of a prince whose amiable nature was so unfitted for such turbulent times. When they reached the house of the mandarin, the prince dismissed his guard, and, having borrowed from that officer his robe, cap, and chair of state, and a garment of plain green silk for Nicholas, the two youths entered the chair and proceeded on their journey with the usual attendants, one of whom went before, as a kind of *avant-garde*, and with a whip to beat them a passage through the crowded streets. At the first guard-house the prince stepped out of the sedan, made himself known to the sentries, and passed in; when, instead of finding the troops

engaged in exercising, or in any of the many games permitted by the board of war, some were gambling, some goading crickets with their chopsticks till the insects killed each other, some were singing profane songs, and disporting in the most riotous and unseemly manner, while many who had been drinking deeply, and still held the spirit cups in their hands were reeling about the pavement, but most remarkable of all, no officers except those of the most subordinate grade were to be seen.

"These, then, are the vile dogs to whom the defence of the Imperial City is entrusted. These are the rogues whom the traitor generals commended," said the prince, indignantly; adding, "Truly the royal house is punished for its sins, for this looketh indeed like the decadence of a dynasty."

"These are but the hands, O my prince for whose acts the heads must be made accountable," said Nicholas.

"Nevertheless the dogs shall be punished, my brother; but let us return," said the prince, going to the gate, where the sentry, recognizing the prince, fell at his feet. "Rise, dog, and as thou wouldst save thy miserable head, say who is the general of this section," said Yong-Li.

"The noble Leang, O Grandson of Heaven," replied the trembling soldier.

"Cans't thou be honest and silent as to my visit?"

"Both, as thy slave values his miserable life," replied the soldier.

"I will trust thee, man, and if I find you so, only

till the rising of to-morrow's sun, thou shalt be promoted," said the prince; adding, "This rogue Leang must be degraded, and thou, O noble Nicholas, take his command." Thus they visited some half-dozen of the chief and most important points of the fortified walls with similar results. With the works themselves he was satisfied, as was also Nicholas, who, young as he was, had often examined the fortifications of the southern province; and, indeed, the whole line of coast between Siam and Japan.

"Nought, my prince, but the treachery of the defenders, or the death-dealing cannon of the red-haired barbarians from the West, could effect an entrance into the city," said he.

"Has my brave brother then seen in use those terrible instruments of war that can crumble the strongest towers of stone to the dust, from beyond the reach of bow-shot?" said the prince.

"Such has been thy servant's fortune, O my prince; it could not be otherwise, for they are used on board the war-ships of my noble father."

"By the tombs of my ancestors, thou art a bold boy," replied the prince; adding, with vehemence,

"As I hope to continue the circle of succession, I would forfeit ten years of life to be in possession of a few, that we might sweep these rebels and Tartars from the face of the earth."

At that moment there arose a great clamor of voices, and, looking out of the chair, the prince saw a great crowd assembled upon one of the canal bridges, when, having ordered the attendant with the

whip to beat a passage through the people, they witnessed the following extraordinary sight:—

Upon a high platform, near the edge of the bridge, stood a large tub, the top of which was covered with some flimsy material, like silk or cotton, through which something, that in the distance bore a resemblance to a human head, bobbed up and down like a jack-in-the-box. Upon the platform, around the tub, stood six priests.

How lowly must the dynasty of the great Tait-sou have fallen, that these miserable bonzes are permitted thus shamefully to extort money from the people," said the prince.

"If thy servant's eyeballs play him not false, O my prince, yonder priests are preparing to sacrifice a human life to their wretched gods," said Nicholas.

Not waiting to hear more, the prince leaped from the chair, and, followed by Nicholas forced a way through the crowd till they reached the platform.

All, however, that could be seen of the victim was the forehead, nose, and eyes; the latter rolled so convulsively and glared so terribly, that, notwithstanding the crowd, Nicholas would have attempted a rescue, had not the prince caught hold of his arm, saying, "Stay, my brother, it is the duty of a prince to see justice done; then addressing the chief bonze, he said, "What crime can this man have committed, O miserable priest, that he should be thus tortured without the presence of the officers of the tribunal of justice?"

"Great has been his crime, O noble youth, and self

sought his punishment, replied the bonze, taken aback by the bold tone of the prince; adding, as he pointed to the head, which bobbed suddenly as he spoke, "He admits my words."

"Open thy lips to the purpose, priest, and as you value your wretched life, let us hear his crime," replied the indignant prince.

"The youth must be a stranger to the capital, indeed, if he has not heard the order of the Son of Heaven, which commands that the villain Christians, who have taken advantage of the great Emperor's kindness to raise and nourish a rebellion throughout the land, should be destroyed."

"Such an order has reached thy servant's ears," said the prince, bowing lowly at the name of his father.

"Know, then, that this wretch was long the slave and follower of one of these Christian dogs—see, he admits it, (and the head bobbed up again;) but, fortunately, the gods changing his heart in time, sent him to our pagoda repentantly declaring his villainy and demanding his punishment (here the head gave another bob of acquiescence) from the priests of Fo, who, consulting the gods, obtained permission for him to choose his own chastisement: his choice was to leap from this platform into the canal."

"But the canal is deep, and the man will drown, priest," said the prince, sternly.

"Surely the youth is strangely ignorant that such a feat is a happiness thousands would willingly seek. We have but given him the preference but for his

zeal and virtue. (Here the head again gave an acquiescent bob.) Again, at the bottom of the canal he will be met by charitable spirits, who will not only welcome him with honor, but conduct him to the yellow stream." So saying, the bonzes commenced preparations for the final act of the tragedy.

"The prince, however, unable any longer to restrain his rage, drew his sword, exclaiming, "Desist, thou murdering rogue; release thy victim immediately."

This violence to their priests so aroused the anger of the pagan crowd, that they would probably have torn Yong-Li to pieces, but for Nicholas, who, beating them backward, cried, "Back, slaves! would you molest the son of your Emperor, the good prince Yong-Li?" and the terrified slaves instantly fell upon their faces. The bonze, though no less dismayed at the presence of the prince, was quicker witted, and said, "Surely the magnificent son of the Son of Heaven would not arrest the flight of a happy soul, impatient to be on its way to the yellow stream."

"Let the miserable wretch speak for himself," said the prince.

"He dares not so anger the gods, who would not only condemn him, but destroy the whole city in their wrath," replied the bonze, giving a sly signal to his brethren to surround the tub, in the event of a rescue being attempted.

"Nevertheless, the wretch shall be saved," said the prince; adding, aloud, "Let the deluded rascal open his lips, or he shall be left to his fate.

At this, the head gave another and stronger jerk upward, but without rising further through the silk, and the eyes rolled and glared more terribly than ever. At which the bonze said, "Cannot the heavenly eyes of the great prince see that the poor creature is suffering from such violent language? See, he is almost distracted and will assuredly expire with grief at so much profanity."

"This is some foul trick, my prince," said Nicholas, who leaped upon the platform so quickly, that, striking one of the priests, he fell against four others, and all were sent flying into the midst of the crowd, who, in their turn, began to pummel them severely for falling so heavily upon their heads and shoulders.

Once upon the platform, Nicholas lost no time in cutting asunder the silk covering of the tub, when, lo! the victim shot up with the rapidity of a rocket, dragging with him, by the hair of his head, a small bonze, in whose hand was the dagger which he had been from time to time plunging into the victim's calves in order to make him utter the responses.

But what was the surprise of the prince when the hands of the intended victim were unbound and the gag removed from his mouth, to see him fall at the feet of Nicholas, clasp his legs, and exclaim, "My noble, noble, master, this is indeed a joyful meeting. Nought but the God of the Christians could have saved Chow's life."

The wretched face, the bleeding legs of the poor boy, so filled the heart of Nicholas with indignation and sorrow, that while tears fell down his cheeks, all

he could say was, "My poor, poor friend Chow, this is indeed a fortunate day."

"Then the sacrifice was not thine own seeking, my poor fellow?" said the prince.

"My own seeking, O mighty son of Ming? Look at thy slave's legs, which the rascals have punctured into lace-work. Surely, had Chow sought the yellow stream, he would have chosen to go in a perfect and decent manner." Then the boy would have fallen, but for Nicholas, who held him in his arms, when he said, "I demand justice on the rogues, O great prince, for I am the servant of the noble Nicholas, thy friend, and was with him a prisoner in the Palace Royal, till the night of the audience, when a eunuch came to me and said the Emperor had signified his gracious wish that poor Chow was to be chopped into ten thousand pieces, but that a great lord taking compassion on me would save my life, and give me great promotion, if I would watch and note down the words and actions of my noble master."

"Didst thou hear the name, surname, and title of the villain lord, O Chow?" said the prince.

"Thy slave was not so fortunate, great prince."

"What answer didst thou make, O Chow?" said Nicholas.

"That they might not only cut thy servant into as many pieces as they chose, but never bury them in the tombs of his ancestors, before he would comply. Whereupon, they gave poor Chow over to these rascal bonzes, who intended to torture him with a dagger in that tub, till agony caused him to leap into the canal."

"Sad must have been thy sufferings, my poor Chow," said the prince; who then ordered his attendants to convey the boy to the palace, in order that the imperial doctors might attend him. Then sending for a body of yah-yu, he ordered them to take the bonze and his assistants to the great prison, to await a trial; after which they returned to the palace.

"Thanks be to Tien, my brother, we have saved thy friend from those vile bonzes," said the prince.

"Would O prince, that we could as easily save the servants of the true God of heaven from their villainies," replied Nicholas, thinking of the sufferings of the Christian fathers.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NICHOLAS RECEIVES AN IMPORTANT COMMAND.

On the day following the visit of the prince to the military stations, a change was made among the officers. Some were bambooed, some reprimanded, and others sent into confinement. The post of Leang, who held the command of five hundred men under the General Kin, being given to Nicholas, he took Chow with him as a kind of sub-officer, and as the wounds of the latter fortunately proved to be only in the flesh, he soon became well enough to caper with delight at the chance his new position might give him of meeting the slayer of his father.

For some time Nicholas had little else to do but keep his men at their posts, and exercise them in the use of the matchlock, which, although the Chinese then knew so little about it, that the rebound of the stock did as much mischief to the owner as the barrel did to his enemies, he had long practised on board his father's ships. Then, again, he would exercise them in sword, and bow and arrow practice, and the use of their shields.

Such was his employment till intelligence arrived that the rebel Li-Kong was on his march to besiege Pekin with a large army, when, seeking an audience

of the Emperor, he threw himself at the foot of the throne, and prayed to be sent with a party of flying horse to make observations, and drive the people of the neighboring towns and villages into the capital for protection. His zeal, however, was useless; for, placing his whole faith in the bonzes and intriguing nobles around him, who laughed to scorn the idea of so improbable an event as the invasion of so great a capital by a mere rebel, Wey-t-song angrily commanded Nicholas to keep to his posts upon the walls, where he remained, till wearied with inaction he longed to return to his father's fleet. Wait a little Nicholas, and there will be action enough.

More than once during the reign of Wey-t-song had famine stalked through the land, but then he had struggled to stem the torrent by opening his purse and granaries. Now, however, that nature withheld her ordinary supplies, a rebel army crowded the approaches to the capital, so that provision could not be brought in, and the dearth of food grew so great, that a pound of rice could not be purchased for less than its weight in silver, and the flesh of horses, rats, dogs, cats, and mice had become so rare, that even rotten skins were bought for human food. The Emperor wickedly kept close within the luxurious apartments of his inner palace, caring but little for the starving people, so that he and the great mandarins could revel in their luxurious ease and pleasures.

Now, as indolence will spread as fast as nettles, the officers of the army, instead of attending to their duties, spend the greater part of their night-watches

in gambling and drinking so hard, that had the enemy come upon them suddenly they must have surren dered. Yet the imperial troops were so numerous and the defences so strong, that with anything like a good show of fighting the rebels could have been beaten back, if not indeed entirely destroyed. As, however, these officers must have been fully aware of all this, it is only reasonable to suppose they were playing another little game of their own, that we shall soon see.

Thus weeks pased away, without more than mere rumors of the movements of the rebel Li-Kong, who, it was said, was fast approaching the capital, and sacking towns or destroying the people on his march. There one day came a number of men to the eastern gate, reporting themselves to be fugitives, who had been driven to seek protection in the capital from Li, who was on his march by the eastern suburbs; and as also they brought the joyful intelligence that a vast quantity of rice was on the road from the southern provinces, under the charge of a body of merchants, who had managed to evade the rebels by taking a different route, they were received with open arms and treated handsomely.

Then, as the General Kin feared that the starving people would set upon the wagons as they entered the city, he came out on the day of their arrival with a large body of soldiers to escort the food to the storehouse, where it could be fairly distributed. But so eager was the general to secure the grain from a sudden rush of the hungry people, that he

encompassed the procession with his troops so perfectly, that neither wagons nor the fugitive tradesmen who accompanied them could be seen by the crowd. Moreover Kin kept close the wagons till they were safe within the fore-court of the storehouses. After performing his duty, the general astonished Nicholas by carrying his indefatigability so far as to personally inspect the walls, post the sentries, and examine the flints of their matchlocks, all of which was very puzzling, for not only was there no enemy to be seen, but the deserters and fugitives reported that the attack, if made at all, would be upon the opposite walls of the city, whither, in fact, Kin had sent already a great part of the soldiers who had hitherto been posted upon that side.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE REBELS ATTACK PEKIN. — TREACHERY OF A GENERAL, AND THE FIGHT.

It was the middle of the third watch; Nicholas was dreaming of the rebel Li-Kong, the Emperor, the princess, the soldiers, and his father's fleet. A sudden grip upon his arm made him set bolt upright upon his sleeping mat, and there stood Chow, in a state of great excitement, holding in his arms his master's habiliments and accoutrements, as if the place had been on fire, or he had suddenly turned thief, and was about commencing business upon his master's clothes.

"Awake, O my master, we are caught like rats in a trap; the rebels are upon us!"

"What words are these, Chow?" said Nicholas, leaping off the mat, taking the clothes and attiring himself.

"The General Kin means harm; let us escape, my master;" and Chow pointed to the open window.

"Thou art a coward, Chow,; draw thy sword, and follow," said Nicholas, rushing with his own weapon in his hand to the walls, where, to his dismay, he found the sentries helplessly intoxicated and lying in all directions; but worse, there, against the walls,

leaned a ladder, by which means a body of troops were about to ascend.

"Softly, Chow," said Nicholas; and like cats they crept toward the ladder upon their knees. Another minute, and a soldier stood upon the uppermost round with a lighted torch in his hand.

"See, the rat makes a signal that all is right," said Nicholas, and in another instant a blow from his fist sent the torch-bearer spinning through the air over the heads of his fellows; then with a yell of rage the man's next comrade jumped upon the parapet, and being received with a violent blow in the stomach from Chow's fist, followed his companion in arms. Another made the same attempt, but picking up the torch which had fallen upon the ramparts, Chow dashed the burning brand in his face, when with a wild howl of pain, the soldier fell backward, sweeping the scaling party off the ladder as clean as if he had been a thirty-two pound cannon ball. Then, making the most of their advantage, the boys caught hold of the ladder and threw it over upon the discomfited rebels, who lay sprawling at the foot of the walls.

Then, holding the torch above his head, as a signal for assistance, Nicholas indeed saw that treachery was in high quarters, for the whole line of walls appeared to be deserted. As for Chow, he had no sooner succeeded in arousing the men from their stupor, and placed some at the great guns, and others along the walls, so that another scaling party would come within range of their matchlocks, than, perceiving a body of the enemy moving to the front he

pointed one of the cannons and applied the torch to the touch-hole; a flash—a roar followed; but the only effect it had upon the rebels was to cause them to send forth loud shouts of exultation. Well they might exult, for the guns were harmless.

"The villain Kin has had the balls withdrawn," exclaimed Chow.

"Our matchlocks are useless, they have been robbed of their flints," said the soldiers, who had attempted to fire them at the same time as Chow had fired the cannon.

"Then back, and brain the dogs with them as they mount the walls," said Nicholas, as the enemy was about attempting another escalade; adding, "Haste thee, O Chow, to the Prince Yong-Li, and pray of him to send assistance to his brother, who dares not quit his post with life;" when, as without a word Chow disappeared from the rampart, Nicholas snatched up a matchlock, and so placed himself and men beneath the breastwork that the arrows might pass over their heads, and many were the scalers who reached the uppermost round of the ladder to be dashed headlong among their comrades by the brave youth and his little band; and so they would have held out for some time, but for a shower of bullets from the matchlocks of a body of soldiers who made their appearance upon the walls, headed by the General Kin himself.

"Seize the dog!" said the traitor, pointing to Nicholas.

"Thou great rogue,"—before, however, Nicholas

could say more he was gagged, his arms bound with cords, and taken by the soldiers to his own room, amid the shoutings of the rebels, who now seemed to be entering the city from all sides.

But why had they not killed him at once? for what reason had they brought him there?

He was not left long in suspense, for no sooner had Kin secured the entrance of his brother rebels into the city than he entered the room, and first examining the cords that bound the boy's arms, to see that there was no possibility of his getting free, he ordered the soldiers from the room, and said, merrily, "The young war tiger is brave, but he is no match for the fire-eater Kin."

"Let the dog without a heart unbind the arms of his prisoner, and he shall discover," was the fierce reply.

"What shall thy servant discover, O brave youth?"

"His villain body hurled out of the window."

"Knows not the youth that I can slay him as if he were a venomous rat?"

"Do this, and I will thank thee for not letting me outlive such hateful treason, thou villain."

"But the youth is young, brave, and should live in honor and high promotion."

"He would be more honored in dying for his Emperor."

"That Emperor is the chosen of Tien, the great Li-Kong, who would have the young war tiger live to serve him."

"These are snake's words, the rogue Li-Kong is

as false as his coward slave Kin, who fears to trust himself with an unbound youth."

"Thou rat, thou pirate, I will slay thee," said the enraged general, drawing his sword.

"Do this, and my vision will be for ever shut out from so much villainy," was the calm reply.

"Now let the young war tiger open his ears, and if he is reasonable he shall be free," said the general, getting the better of his rage.

"Then unbind his arms, thou dog."

"Truly, if thou wilt promise to serve the great Emperor Li-Kong."

"Even if so much treason existed in my heart, how could so mean a person serve so great a prince?"

"Is he not the son of the great merchant of the south, who rules the four seas?"

"If the dull rogue hath discovered his prisoner's birth, how is this that he dares to think that when free he would let so great a traitor live, after such an execrable proposition?"

Greatly perplexed at this rebuff, Kin could make no reply. Suddenly, the booming of cannon, the roar of millions of voices, and the clash of arms, sounded through the night air, and he said, "Hear you that cannon, boy? It is the terrible mouthpiece of the fugitive tradespeople, who accompanied the rice wagons."

"O thou miserable rogue," exclaimed Nicholas, as it now flashed across his mind that the rice wagons and the fugitive tradespeople had been the ruse by which Li-Kong had obtained an entrance into the

city for his troops. "O that he was free, for there were guards enough yet to save the imperial family."

"It is a maxim that it is no use repining for the past, O youth. By his tyranny and oppression Wey-t-song has forfeited the throne to the heaven-selected Li-Kong, whose troops now fill the streets, and who will confer upon the young war tiger high rank, and upon his parent, the great sea chief, a kingdom, if he will submissively rule the seas as a tributary. See the success of the great Li," he added, as the room, nay, the whole sky became illuminated, "the palace is in flames—let the young war tiger give his answer."

"If it is adverse?" asked Nicholas.

"The head of the son will be sent to the father."

Then bitter were the feelings of Nicholas—for himself? no! for he felt it his duty to die; but for his father, for the princess—still there was a chance of escape. Should he comply? surely a promise to traitors would not be valid. He considered for a moment—it was but for a moment—and even the bold sea-boy had not courage enough to—tell a lie.

Perceiving his hesitation, the countenance of Kin brightened. "The noble youth is reasonable; he consents," said he.

"No, thou false rogue."

"Then he dies a miserable death," said the enraged Kin, calling to his guard. There was no reply, but a scuffle in the passage, and the sound of angry voices, when, pale with fear, the general opened the door, and the next minute was—in the arms of Chow, who

held him till the soldiers of the prince, who acompanied him, had bound the traitor as tightly as a mummy.

"It is our turn now, thou vile rogue," said Chow, as he cut the cords that bound his master.

"This is well accomplished my brave Chow; but now let us leave the traitor and haste to the palace," Nicholas.

"It is hopeless, O my master, for the outer palace is in flames, and surrounded by the rebels."

"Is it not a maxim that no effort is hopeless to the brave?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ATTACK ON THE PALACE.—SUICIDE OF THE EMPEROR, THE PRINCESS WOUNDED.

HAVING dismissed the soldiers, the two boys mingled with the vast crowd that was surging toward the palace with deafening cheers for Li-Kong, who, by the treachery of the general, aided by those of his own troops who for weeks past had been passing into the city under the pretence of being fugitive tradespeople, had now reached the very walls of the outer palace without opposition. Indeed, so great were the numbers of the rebel troops and the mass of people who joined on their way, that when they came in sight of the palace walls the imperial soldiers fled in dismay, and so well had the rebel chief, and his brother traitors near the person of the Emperor, organized the conspiracy, that it was not until the outer palace was in flames that Wey-t-song became aware that Li-Kong had even entered Pekin. Then, however, like another Sardanapalus, his energies became aroused, and he collected together some few hundreds of his body guard, and determined to sell his life as dearly as possible, and till morning he held out; for so well did his guards handle the bows, and so clumsily did the rebels use their matchlocks, that it was early

morning before the latter could effect an entrance to the inner palace.

When, however, the broad light of morning came, what with the force of numbers, and their being enabled to use their matchlocks to greater advantage, they soon forced the gates and rushed into the great court *en masse*. Being among the first to enter, Nicholas and Chow beheld the Emperor, in the uniform of one of his own officers, exhorting his troops to die with him rather than to succumb to rebels. After a short fight, however, the coward guards threw down their arms, and shouted, "Long life to the heaven-bestowed Emperor Li-Kong." Indignant at their cowardice, Nicholas would have rushed among them, but for Chow, who whispered the danger of the princess.

For a minute the fraternizatiou of the guards appeased the rebels—it was only for a minute—then they shouted for the head of the vile Wey-t-song, and one of the guards pointing to the inner palace, they ran in that direction like a herd of hungry wolves, killing all, men, women, or children, whom they met in their way; then they came to the ladies' palace, and with hideous shouts of exultation, set it on fire; and the poor women, at least those who were not destroyed by the flames, ran from all quarters, but, alas! only to fall by the swords of the fiends, or, if escaping the latter, to perform, to them, the sacred duty of throwing themselves headlong into the canals, that they might not survive the downfall of their imperial master.

More infuriated than the rebels, and with a wild hope of saving the Emperor and the princess, Nicholas ran through the burning palace, as if seeking death from the falling timbers; but, alas no clue could be found to those he sought. At length he thought of the imperial gardens, a place that the rebels, in their anxiety to plunder the palace, had forgotten.

"So, while Chow went in an opposite direction, he took the path leading to the mulberry grove, and there, upon a mound, he discovered the object of his search—both Emperor and princess; but, to his horror, the first dead, and hanging by his own girdle from the bough of a prune-tree, and the princess senseless, expiring from a deep wound in her side, from which the blood was flowing copiously. Shocked so that the blood in his veins seemed congealed, Nicholas cut down the dead Emperor with his sword, then stanched the wound of the princess with his silk girdle, ran to the lake, filled his cap with water, and sprinkled it in her face, when, joy! the pale face resumed the hue of life—still she was insensible, and he miserable, for he knew not what other means to adopt for her restoration. Then came the sound of approaching footsteps— it might be a rebel, and he clutched his sword, determined to die before the royal lady should be taken from him—but no, it was Chow, who, having lost himself for some time in the mazes of the garden, had reached the spot by mere accident; and no sooner did the faithful fellow perceive the tragic scene, than he fell upon his knees and wept.

"Truly the villains will speedily be here, and we shall be lost if we can not discover some hiding-place," said Nicholas.

"The gods must intend our escape from this den of thieves, for I have just crept out of yonder cavern," said Chow, pointing to a thick bush at some short distance from where they were standing.

Then, without more words, they bore the senseless girl to the spot indicated by Chow, and pushing aside the brushwood, entered a cavern lighted from the top by a small grating, and laid her upon the floor. The stanching of the blood, the cold water, and the movement, revived her, when she exclaimed, "This terrible dream—where am I? who art thou, thou terrible man?"

"Fear not beautiful daughter of the Ming, for thou art in the hands of thy own servants, who have saved thee——"

"Saved me!" she said, with a vacant gaze at Nicholas; then, as if remembering some terrible occurrence, added, "From my royal father, who plunged his dagger in my side, that his daughter might escape the villain Li-Kong, but the Emperor, my parent, O noble youth?"

"Alas! unfortunate princess——"

"Enough—enough—I remember all—the holy Emperor has saved himself the disgrace of falling into the power of the traitor. But why then," she added, bitterly, "has the worthless life of a daughter of his own blood been saved?"

"To be the most valued jewel in the throne of her brother the Emperor Yong-Li," said Nicholas.

"By restoring my worthless life thou hast brought shame and disgrace upon the daughter of thy Emperor, for hath it not ever been the custom of the daughters of the Son of Heaven to kill themselves upon the downfall of their sovereign?"

"The princess is of the religion of the Lord of Heaven, who alone giveth and taketh life," replied Nicholas.

"Thou art right, noble youth, and the descendant of Tait-sou will bear her misfortunes more as becomes a Christian than a daughter of China," said the princess; adding, sorrowfully, "but the remains of my beloved parent——"

"Shall be saved from the profane hands of rebels if the princess will remain within this cavern," replied Nicholas; who, followed by Chow, returned to the mound, where for a minute he stood contemplating all that remained of the last Emperor of the Ming dynasty. Alas! poor prince, that thy virtues should have been clouded with so many faults. See, O Chow, how bitterly he felt the ingratitude of his petted and pampered guards," said Nicholas, reading some lines that the Emperor had written in his own blood upon the border of his robe, and which were:—"The heavens are in thy favor, O Li-Kong; yet, although my subjects have basely abandoned me, I beseech of thee, as their parent, to wreak thy vengeance on my body; but save, O save my deluded people."

"The rebels come this way," said Chow.

"Let us hide till they have passed," said Nicholas,

and snatching up his cross-bow, he ascended the nearest tree, believing that Chow had done likewise.

The new comers were two officers of Li-Kong.

"It was in this direction, O Lee, near the mulberry grove, that the woman slave saw the princess fly," said one, looking about.

"So said the heaven-bestowed Li," replied the other; but perceiving the body of the deposed sovereign, rebel as he was, his inherited awe for the majesty of the Emperor caused him to throw himself upon the ground, saying, "This then, O my poor prince, is the end of thy glories! indeed thy punishment has been severe, may it lead thy successor to avoid thy faults."

"Get thee to thy feet, O Quang, for the Emperor who can forsake his people well merits that they should forsake him in his extremity; moreover, should the heaven-bestowed Li see thee, he will cause thy foolish head to be chopped from thy shoulders,for, like a hungry tiger, he cares but little whether his food be friends or enemies, so that he can satisfy his appetite."

"Thy words are good," said Quang, rising to his feet; adding, "Yet the most ravenous beast becomes satisfied."

"True, O Quang, but when this morning the great Li for the first time sat upon the golden throne of state, it trembled and tottered."

"A sad omen, O Lee; surely his majesty should have chosen a fortunate day."

"Truly, according to the chief bonze, it is an omen, signifying that while the body of Wey-t-song remains

whole, the heaven-bestowed Emperor is in danger, and it is this that has angered him; but see, he comes," and both fell to the earth before the rebel general, who approaching with his great officers, said, "Have you discovered the princess, you crawling slaves?"

"At the risk of their lives thy slaves must deliver their miserable intelligence to the fortunate and heaven-bestowed founder of the most magnificent of dynasties," said Quang.

"Let the slave open his lips."

"The great princess has escaped with the Christian woman Candida," replied the trembling Quang.

"Escaped!" exclaimed the tyrant; "then let it be proclaimed throughout the empire that he who can bring her unarmed to our feet, shall receive high promotion, and the weight of his mean body in gold;" but at that moment, for the first time, seeing the body of the Emperor, he exclaimed, "The great traitor to his people has been too fortunate in having been permitted to close a luxurious career with the honorable punishment of self-destruction; he should have been exhibited alive in a cage;" then reading the lines upon the dead sovereign's robe, "See thou, O Quang, that the miserable body be cut into a thousand pieces, and distributed far from the tombs of his royal ancestors," said this new-made sovereign, with less generosity than the second Emperor of the Tartar race, who some years after, while hunting, happening to see in the distance the monument which had been erected to the memory of the unfortunate

Wey-t-song, quitted his horse, and falling upon the earth, said, with tears in his eyes, "O Prince! O Emperor! worthy of a better fate, you know that your destruction was not owing to us, your death lies not at our door, your own subjects brought it upon you, it was they that betrayed you; it is there fore upon them, and not on my ancestors, that heaven must send down vengeance."

As you may imagine, this arrested the attention of Nicholas, who became deeply interested, and, as he listened, it was with difficulty he could keep down his indignation. He had smiled as he heard of Lee's terror at the omen, groaned at the slaughter of the people, rejoiced at the escape of the Lady Candida, the more so as the soldiers believed that she had carried away the princess with her, which would at least throw them off the right track; then at the sight of the brutal Li he had instinctively placed an arrow on his bow, but the danger of the princess taught him prudence, and he did but nervously twitch the string; when, however, Li spoke of the dead Emperor his heart throbbed with indignation, and he was nigh losing his presence of mind; then when Li delivered the order for the mutilation of the body, every vein in the boy's forehead and neck seemed bursting with rage, which, when the tyrant struck the corpse with his foot, he could no longer suppress; no human power could keep it back, and just missing the tyrant's throat so narrowly that its feather brushed his necklace, an arrow pierced the bark of the tree against which he was standing.

"See with what vigilance the guards have sought for traitors, when this could so nearly reach the mark," said the brave rogue, coolly, but holding his shield in readiness for the next.

Unlike Li-Kong, whose courage was as remarkable as his crimes, the teeth of his officers chattered, and their knees knocked together with fear, as if the arrow had been a thunderbolt from their own gods; when, however, they recovered, they placed their shields before their faces and rushed to the direction from whence the arrow had flown, and would soon have discovered Nicholas but for a huge lion, who, finding the door of his cage open, rushed upon the group with such unmistakable intentions, that not only the officers, but Li-Kong, brave as he was, fled in terror to the palace, with the beast at their heels. You will little wonder at the extreme fright of the soldiers, when I tell you that this lion was the only animal of his kind in China, having been presented to the late Emperor by a foreign king, or they would probably have met the brute face to face.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SECRET CAVERN.—THE PRINCESS SAVED BY TH BOYS.

"THOU hast had a narrow escape, O most prudent master," said Chow, coming forth when he saw the coast clear.

"Had I been taken, it would have been a just punishment for missing my mark; but by what fortunate chance did that savage beast escape from his cage, O Chow?" replied Nicholas, descending the tree.

"That chance, O my master was the foresight of thy servant, who unfastened the door of the cage of that four-footed brother of Yen-Vang, neither knowing nor caring whether he might not himself be the first meal, so that the noble Nicholas escaped."

"It was well done, my brave Chow; yet surely that rebel rogue must be protected by some demon to have escaped so narrowly both arrow and lion; but let us haste to the cavern, or they may return."

Now, although the whole of this adventure had not occupied more than an hour, Nicholas was greatly in fear for what might have happened to the princess, an anxiety reciprocated by the princess, who, as soon as she saw them again, exclaimed, "Thank heaven, the noble youth is saved;" then added reproachfully, "But he has not performed his promise, for he

brings not the sacred remains of his royal master;" when, however, Nicholas related the adventure, although in great anguish of mind at being denied the sacred right of paying the last office of respect to the corpse of her parent, she was overjoyed at their escape.

"Escape, O great princess; thy small servant is not clever and gifted, like the mole, or he would eat a hole through the end of this rat-trap; for to attempt it by the entrance would be to submissively ask the traitor Li-Kong to cut us all into ten thousand pieces," said Chow.

"The words of the brave Chow are reasonable, for truly this cavern is but a trap," said Nicholas.

"It is not so; push thou against the end of the cavern," said the princess.

"Truly we the fortunate," said Nicholas, with astonishment, as he found the end giving way, and disclosing to his vision a long, narrow passage.

"It was made by the great Tait-sou, and leads to an unfrequented suburb of the city; by this means he could leave the palace alone, and by mixing among the people judge for himself how the mandarins were respected by them," said the princess.

"Surely they will follow us here," said Nicholas.

"Not so, noble youth; for the secret is known but to few. It was the sole vile act of the great Tait-son's reign that he caused this passage to be made by condemned prisoners, whom he afterward slew, that they might not divulge the secret," said the princess, adding, "Let us trace its course."

Then, helping the wounded girl to walk, they proceeded down the passage for a considerable distance, till their progress was arrested by a door; pushing this, however, they found themselves in a small cavern, lighted, like the one at which they had entered, by a small grating from above.

"How is it possible, O noble Nicholas, that we can pass through the roaring rebels, who are, doubtless, without?" said Chow.

"It is a reasonable question, O noble youth; truly we had better remain here till night," said the princess.

But, having considered for a minute, Nicholas said, "Not so, great princess; remain thou here with Chow, and thy servant will find some means of deliverance;" whereupon he borrowed from Chow his less conspicuous cap, robe, and boots, then felt his way up a flight of narrow steps, till his head struck against a trap-door; lifting this gently, he found himself in a small stone room, the door of which stood open; passing this, he came into an oblong court, and saw at once that the place had been erected as a tomb, and, moreover, that he was at the most remote end of a valley of tombs. So far he believed the princess to be in a place of safety, for none, even in those rebellious days, would dare to enter the ancestral tomb of another.

Crossing this valley of sepulchres with inverted face, as if in deep contemplation after visiting the tomb of his ancestors, he came into the open road, where a vast crowd were floating onward into the

city, mad with excitement, and shouting, "Many years' life to the heaven-sent Emperor!" he mixed with them, and so, safely passed onward to the house of the merchant Yang, who no sooner saw him than he ordered an incense table, and returned thanks to Fo for his safety. "For," said he, "thy servant made but little doubt that the son of the great Chin-Chi-Loong had been slain."

"The son of the merchant of the south lives to avenge the death of his Emperor," said Nicholas.

"Hist! hist!" said the merchant, pale with fear, lest some servant might hear the words; adding, "Truly Wey-t-song but merited his fate."

"Art thou also a traitor, O Yang?" exclaimed Nicholas, indignantly.

"The rich need be cautious, for is it not a maxim, that a successful rebel is more to be feared than a dead Emperor, O noble Nicholas?"

Indignant as he was at this disloyalty, Nicholas, remembering the necessity of the princess, dissembled his anger, and said, "Is the worthy Yang under sufficient obligation to Chin-Chi-Loong to serve his son?"

"Even to the extent of his life and fortune."

"Then I will trust thee," said Nicholas, dropping the usual formality of speech, and telling him the whole of his adventure of the morning.

"Truly, O youth, this is a dangerous affair; but Yang dares not break faith with the great chief who may some day be master of us all," said the merchant, trembling with fear.

"This, then, is just; I would have the head-dress and mourning garb of a widow, and the coarse robes of two Coolies."

"This is a cautious method of proceeding, and shall be done," said Yang, who left the room, leaving the impatient youth walking to and fro with great anxiety. The articles, however, not being very difficult to obtain in that part of the city, the merchant soon returned with them packed up in a small bale; then, hastily thanking Yang, Nicholas took the bale with him some little distance from the house, and paid two Coolies to carry him in their sedan to the gate of the valley of tombs; having arrived there, he jumped out of the chair, and paid the Coolies handsomely, telling them to leave it near the gate, and to fetch him again in two hours' time; when, not in the least doubting the honesty of so generous a customer, the Coolies went off to spend their earnings at a wine-shop, and Nicholas proceeded cautiously to the cavern.

"Having explained his scheme to the princess, he left her in the cavern to attire herself in the widow's weeds, while he and Chow proceeded to the tomb above, to assume the garbs of Coolies.

"This being done, he gave Chow some silver and sent him off to the wine-shop, after which he assisted the princess up the steps, and, supporting her, they slowly walked through the valley, till they came within a short distance of the gate, when, to the delight of Nicholas, Chow came up to them and said:—

"I found the two sots drinking like fishes, and

when I told them a merchant wished to hire them, they laughed heartily, saying, that they had already been engaged by too good a passenger to stir for the next two hours.'

"Then, assisting the princess into the chair, Nicholas and Chow took the place of the Coolies, and so carried it to the house of Yang.

As Yang had prepared the ladies of his family to receive a young girl, who, he said, was about to be taken into a distant province by her brother, as soon as the troubles had subsided, the princess was warmly received in the Hall of Ancestors, and immediately conducted to the inner apartments of the house. Cleverly as this was managed, Nicholas now trembled for the safety of the princess; indeed, she could be safe no where, but with the Lady Candida, or the Prince Yong-Li, both of whom he believed to have fled to Woo-san-Kwei, in Leao-tong, therefore, difficult as was the task, he determined to take her to that province. As for Yang, whose loyalty was stronger toward the family of Nicholas than to the imperial line, and who really wished a person likely to prove so dangerous as the princess out of his house, he offered his advice and assistance; and as a small junk belonging to him was about to proceed to Tien-sin, on the banks of the Pei-ho (or white river) with a cargo of goods in exchange for salt, he offered to place it at the command of Nicholas, who, when at the mouth of the river, would find it no difficult matter to make a voyage through the gulf of Pe-tche-Lee, and of Leao tong, to some town upon the coast.

This being arranged, they determined that the junk should start as soon as she was laden, and that the princess should embark as a young widow, whose husband having been killed in the rebellion, was returning to see her friends in Leao-tong. But then the princess could not travel without a female attendant,—and whom could they trust? that seemed their greatest difficulty. It was surmounted, however as you will see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXX.

A LARGE STOCK OF LADIES, TWO TAELS PER SACK.

Previously to his successful march upon Pekin, Li-Kong had besieged the capital of the great province of Honan, which, after a few days' hard fighting, he succeeded in taking; when by way of punishing the inhabitants for their brave resistance, he ordered a slaughter so large and indiscriminate that for many after years his name was used as a bugbear to frighten children; so insatiable was his appetite for decapitation, that, like Nero, he longed that the millions had but one neck, that he might strike the whole of their heads at a blow.

The mightiest rivers, however, can but run their course, and so at length, in the event of his making himself Emperor, he might have some subjects left, he commenced to banish and to pardon, and by way of rewarding his soldiers, one day when he was in a good humor, he commanded them to sell the whole of the remaining women prisoners in the public market-place, and keep the money; but as the soldiers asked such high prices, and the fathers, husbands, and brothers, of Honan, had been robbed of their property, after a two days' sale a large stock of ladies

remained on hand, which they were obliged to take with them to Pekin, where, after the conquest, they hoped to obtain better prices.

Tyrants are, however capricious; and so, being offended with his soldiers for not discovering the princess, with hideous humor Li-Kong ordered the women to be placed in sacks, and sold with other plunder at two taels each.

Now it so happened that on the morning of the sale, Chow was passing through the market-place, and seeing a crowd of people examining the sacks, which were arranged in rows and tied at the necks, with small breathing holes near the top, he stopped to watch the progress of the cruel comedy. Anxious fathers, brothers, and husbands, who had followed the army from Honan, for the purpose of rescuing their female relatives, bought sack after sack at the reduced price, each, when the purchase was completed, tearing them open; the greater number, however, giving vent to fearful cries, when they discovered that their chance in the lottery proved a blank; others, recognizing a wife, daughter, or sister, would become almost frantic with joy. Many, before purchasing, would slip behind a sack, rip it with a knife, to have a peep, and get rewarded with a sound caning for their artfulness.

Well there were only half a ton, or at least five sacks of ladies left for disposal, when a great lout of a countryman drew up in his cart, jumped out, and after looking at his almanac, said, "Truly this is a fortunate day, and I am likely to get a good wife cheap; so,

although two taels is all I have obtained for my last crop of rice, I will trust to Fo; for young or old, handsome or ugly, I must have a wife to help me till my grounds." Just then a shrill scream issued from one of the sacks. "Who knows," continued the countryman, "but the gods may have sent that scream to direct my choice, for if the woman is neither young nor pretty she may be well dressed, and, consequently the wife or daughter of some wealthy mandarin, who will purchase her of me, and so make my fortune?"

"Let the noble paddy bird make his choice quickly," said a soldier.

"There are the two taels, most illustrious war tiger," said the countryman, giving the money and taking his choice.

"We will see thy choice," said one of the soldiers, about to open the sack.

"Nay, illustrious soldier, it would offend the gods if other eyes but mine saw my prize." So saying, the man took the sack up in his huge arms, lifted it into the cart, and drove slowly away, followed by Chow, who was curious to discover the kind of prize the wiseacre had drawn.

Unable to restrain his curiosity, the man no sooner reached an unfrequented part of the suburbs than he stopped by the bank of a canal, pulled a knife from his pocket, ripped open the sack; but then a change came o'er his dream, for with his body bent double, his two hands upon his knees, and his bullet head thrown to the extreme stretching of his neck, he

stared with disgust for at least a minute, then in a paroxysm of rage, the disappointed ruffian placed his hands upon the woman's shoulders, screaming, "Thou vile old bamboo stick!"

The trembling woman fell upon her knees and prayed for mercy.

"Has the wretched woman no friend who will purchase her?"

"Truly the friends and relations of thy servant have been slain by the soldiers; she has no friend in the world."

"Thou hast robbed me of my money, thou antique rat, and shall be punished," said the brute, who, first striking her to the ground, picked her up in his arms, and would have thrown her into the canal but for Chow, who, going to the back of the cart, caught hold of the man's legs and dragged him on to the ground, when, not comprehending the wherefore of his wheelbarrow position, the fellow began to roar for mercy, but turning his face and finding his enemy to be a mere youth, he sprang upon his legs and attacked him with his clenched fists. For a time they had a hard fight, after the fashion of the Chinese, who are as much given to that sport, pastime, or brutality, as the English themselves. At length, however, with one well-directed blow, Chow settled the transaction, when, admitting himself to be soundly thrashed, as all women-beaters should be, the bully fell upon his knees, and said, that if the woman were a relation he was sorry for what he had done in the moment of vexation at losing his money, and moreover, begged

that Chow would purchase her again for half the amount he had paid.

"Take the whole, thou miserable dog," said Chow, throwing down two taels that Nicholas had given him in the morning, to purchase a thick robe for the voyage to Leao-tong, then, lifting the poor creature from the cart, he laid her upon the bank of the canal, and by dashing water in her face brought her to her senses. But why does Chow suddenly fall at her feet, kiss the hem of her garment, take both her hands in his own, gaze in her face for a moment, and then, throwing his arms around her neck, sob like an infant. Surely there was some good reason for such strange conduct?—We shall see.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CHOW MAKES A DISCOVERY, AND NICHOLAS A SURPRISE.

WHILE Chow had been engaged in his adventure with the countryman, Yang recived intelligence from the commander of his junk, that the vessel was laden, and only awaited his orders for sailing. So far, circumstances were favorable for the voyage to Leaotong, and if they could but secure a proper attendant for the princess they might set out that evening. That was the great difficulty to be got over. Many plans were suggested, but all seemed so fraught with danger of discovery, that they were well nigh at their wit's end. While Nicholas and Yang were discussing the matter, there was a great hammering upon the gong at the door. It was Chow, who in another minute stood before them. Alone? No, but to the astonishment of Nicholas, accompanied by a woman, so veiled that no feature could be seen.

"How! what means this? Who is this woman?" exclaimed Nicholas.

"The noble Nicholas bestowed two taels upon his servant."

"What words are these?" replied Nicholas, impatiently; adding; "Hast thou bought the robe?"

"Pardon, O noble master, but thy servant can bet

ter do without a robe for the rest of his life than the glorious purchase he has made with those taels."

"What purchase is this, thou rogue?" said Nicholas, vexed that he could get no direct answer.

"His dearly beloved lost mother, O my master."

"Thy mother! What words are these?"

Then, when Chow had related the scene with the sacks, and his adventure with the countryman, and how that it resulted in the discovery of his mother, who stood before them, Nicholas heartily and sincerely congratulated him, as did also the merchants, who ordered the servants to take her to the inner apartments, all of which so gratified the delighted Chow that he fell at the feet of Nicholas, kissed the hem of his robe, and with tears of gratitude and joy told them that his mother had made her escape from the slayer of her husband, but having been retaken, the enraged mandarin had ordered her to be sold with the other women. So, O noble Nicholas, has the great Tien rewarded thy servant for endeavoring to rescue what he thought to be a strange woman from a villain, who was about casting her in the canal."

"Now, nothing could be more fortunate for all parties than this discovery of Chow's, for as the mother would not leave Chow, nor Chow leave his mother or his master, if he could help it, it was speedily settled that no better attendant could be found for the princess, and so it was arranged that they should start at once.

The merchant, partly by his great interest with the

usurper s government, and partly by bribes, secured a com-ho or passport for himself and family; sedan chairs were procured, and the whole party passed through the city to the river, where the junk was awaiting them. Then, having seen them safe on board and given instructions to his captain to obey Nicholas, he placed a purse of silver in the youth's hands, took his leave, and left the travelers to pursue their journey, and with but one interruption from a river mandarin, who stopped their progress to examine their cam-ho, the junk proceeded down the Pei-ho, or white river.

The junk was upon a small scale something like what the houses of our merchants were, when, proud of their profession, they had their residences attached to their warehouses, one-half being occupied by the cargo, and the other divided into rooms, each of which was furnished in accordance with the quality of its tenant. The two usually set aside for the ladies of the family were tenanted by the princess, who, as became her rank and sex, kept herself secluded from the eyes of the male passengers and sailors.

For several days they continued their voyage down the river, till by the fields of millet seed, pulse, and turnips, the numerous mud hovels, the shoals of small boats, and the thousands of starving men, women, and children, who were paddling about the fields, and the very city of huge salt stacks upon the banks, they saw that they were approaching the town of Tien-sin, at which place, in consequence of the number of vessels which had arrived that day laden with

timber, they were delayed for some time before the captain could unload his vessel and take in a cargo of salt.

As in our own manufacturing counties many thousands of poor mechanics and artisans make little livings for themselves and great fortunes for their employers, so in Tien-sin, the most miserably poor and shrivelled portion of the vast population in China produce a commodity which places their masters, the salt dealers, among the most wealthy merchants in the Empire. While the captain is unloading his cargo I will tell you how these people produce this common edible.

In addition to the pits of salt, which, like coal, are found in many of the provinces, there are many places where it is discovered by scattered spots of gray earth. To obtain this salt, they level the surface of the earth as smooth as glass and in a sloping direction so that the water will run off. When dried by the sun, and the white particles of salt are seen, they first raise it in small heaps, like haycocks, then spread it upon sloping tables with ledges, and pour soft water upon it, which, as it soaks in, extracts the salt and runs into an earthen vessel by means of a small channel The earth thus drained is not wasted, but laid aside, so that after a few days, when dry, they reduce it to a fine powder, and replace it in the spot from whence it was taken, when, after six days, it is again mixed with particles of salt, which are again extracted as before, so that not one atom becomes lost.

While the men are thus engaged in the fields, the women and children are employed in huts, in boiling the salt water in large iron basins, which they place over an earthen stove, with holes made in such a manner that the fire heats all the basins alike. When the salt water has boiled some time, it becomes thick, and changes slowly into a very white salt, which is stirred with an iron spatula till it becomes quite dry.

When the captain had exchanged his cargo for another of dates, which he intended again to exchange profitably in Leao-tong for peas and drugs, Nicholas purchased a quantity of furs and mats, which he soon found to be necessary; for, as they approached further to the north, the winds blew keenly, and the iceblocks floated so numerously as frequently to impede their voyage; indeed, the cold was so intense that nothing but the fear of losing life or liberty, or the love of gold, would have induced any one to make the voyage in that inclement season (it was in November). Indeed, by the time they had passed the the mouth of the Pei-ho and got into the gulf of Pe-tche-Lee, the snow fell so heavily, and the north winds blew so keenly, that, breaking through all discipline, the sailors lighted fires upon the deck, and laid near them, drinking rice spirit so copiously, that had not Nicholas, who knew so well how to manage such insubordinates, thrown the spirit tubs overboard, they must have foundered upon the *Sha-loo-poo-teen* islands. As it was, so long and so rough was the passage across the gulf, that the princess became fearfully ill; so much so, indeed, that at one

time they feared she would have died. At length, however, they came to an anchor off the coast of Kin-Chow, a distance of seven miles from the shore, and so planted with dangerous rocks that they were compelled to make fire-signals for the townspeople to put off to them in their lighters or barges.

As the people have these lighters always ready for the purpose, it was not long before several answered the signal, and came alongside. Choosing the most commodious, Nicholas caused a large fire to be lighted in the cabin, where the princess, who was too ill to walk, was lifted on board, and the lightermen rowed them the roughest seven miles of their journey. Nicholas and Chow paced the deck in no very good humor, as they were obliged to entrust themselves to the slow movements of the boatmen, who neither for love nor money would hasten their pace. Moreover, as the sea rolled so heavily, the distance was lengthened by their being compelled to take a circuitous course between and around the dangerous rocks.

When the boatman, who, although slow, were sure, brought them beneath the huge rocks which form the sea-walls of Leao-tong, Chow looked up with amazement. "Surely," said he, "Yen-Vang must have built these great rocks to prevent the province from falling upon the heads of the people in his watery dominions;" adding, as he saw some little birds, like swallows, flying about the rocks, "Truly, if my eyeballs are straight, those little creatures promise us some of the soup of life."

"Truly our eyeballs play us false, O Chow, for these birds are seldom found but on the coast of Tonquin, Java, and Cochin-China," said Nicholas doubtfully.

"It is true that the servant has not the wisdom of his master, yet the stomach and the nose are excellent diviners. Moreover, it is said that this bird-nest soup is strengthening to the weak. The princess is weak, O my master, and Chow would obtain some of those nests."

Then, as they were near a jutting point of the rock of no very difficult ascent, Nicholas ordered the barge to stop, while Chow ascended and procured some half-dozen of the nests, from which to the present day, one of the most popular dishes of China is made.

As Nicholas had said, these birds' nests are seldom found except on the coasts of Java, Cochin-China, and Tonquin. The birds are not unlike swallows, as to their feathers; the nests, which they build high up in the clefts of the rocks, are supposed to be composed of small sea-fish, fastened together by means of a viscous juice, which distils from the beaks of the little creatures, and serves as a gum to fasten the nests to the rock. They are also seen to take the froth that floats upon the sea, with which they cement every part of their nests, in the same manner that swallows build with mud and clay. This matter being dried, becomes solid, transparent, and of a greenish color; but, while fresh, it is generally white.

When Chow had procured these nests, the boatmen resumed their toil, and in a short time reached

the harbor; Chow landed first, and having procured a litter, the princess and his mother were conveyed through the rows of dirty-looking granite houses, which form the town of Kin-Chow, till they arrived at a small inn.

CHAPTER XXXII.

NICHOLAS PUNISHES AN UNGRATEFUL INNKEEPER, AND ESCAPES FROM HIS TREACHERY.

REJOICED that the tedious sea-voyage was at an end and that the princess would, in all probability, by a few day's rest, gain health and strength sufficient for the long land journey before them, you may guess the vexation of Nicholas, on arriving at the inn, to find a crowd of persons around the door enjoying the following scene. The innkeeper was kneeling before the chair of a tax-gathering mandarin, surroun ded by his bamboo sticks in waiting, who seemed to have in their charge three beggars.

Mandarin.—"Thrice hath the dog's hide been corrected, and yet his tribute is not ready."

Innkeeper.—"Is it not true, O tribute-collecting lord, that but little may be gleaned from an empty purse?"

Mandarin.—"Therein is thy crime, slave, that having thrice received our paternal correction, thy vile purse should still remain empty. Know, thou mean dog, that the purse of the subject should be ever at the service of the Emperor."

Innkeeper, giving his empty purse.—"The laws of the empire must be obeyed, there is thy servant's purse."

Mandarin, angrily.—"Would the vile innkeeper laugh in our face?"

Innkeeper.—"Surely, O great mandarin, the owner of an empty purse hath but little cause for laughing!"

Mandarin.—"Thou incorrigible dog, where hath been thy industry, that thou hast not sufficient even to pay thy taxes?"

Innkeeper.—"Truly the wars and the robbers have driven from the province its trade, and thy servant hath not rice sufficient to sustain life in the mean bodies of himself and family."

Mandarin.—"If these are straight words, the dog's life cannot be of value to him; let him, therefore, pay the debt he owes to the Emperor, by humbly begging of the Tartar-subduing General, Woo-san-Kwei to let him offer his carcass of full measure to the barbarians, that he may shield the life of a better man."

Innkeeper.—Truly, O fountain of wisdom the officers of the rebel-subduing general have already stolen from thy servant his four sons."

Mandarin.—"Stolen, thou vile rat! Let the rogue receive twenty blows for this word of disrespect, and fifty for half the debt he owes to the Emperor."

In an instant the innkeeper was thrown upon his face, and while one man held his head, and another his feet, a third belabored the poor fellow till he roared again. When the punishment was concluded, and the innkeeper had, according to custom, thanked the official for his kindness, the mandarin

said, "Such is the punishment of rogues who will not pay their taxes; adding, "But that the cheating innkeeper may not escape too easily, let him provide food and lodging for these three poor people till his debt be paid."

"May thy servant inquire the amount of this innkeeper's debt; for it is fitting that the taxes should be paid?" said Nicholas, coming forward to the astonishment of the official, who said, sternly, "The sum, bold stranger, is one ounce of silver."

"Then, may thy servant be permitted to pay this silver; for he would engage for himself and sister the man's house, which cannot be large enough for these poor people also?"

"Truly it may not be refused," replied the mandarin, taking the money, and rescinding his order for the accommodation of the poor people; but adding, as he left the spot, "It is a maxim that people should settle their own debts before paying those of others."

"Where is the justice now, my master; for although he has received the debt in full, that rat of the taxes hath not taken back the blows from this poor man's hide?" said Chow, fortunately for himself in such soft tones that he could not be heard by the mandarin. More pleased than otherwise at the scene which they had considered good fun, the crowd dispersed; when, silencing the noisy gratitude of the innkeeper, who, after all, had been more frightened than hurt with the blows which had been dealt out to him, as much as a matter of form as a punishment, Nicholas and his party entered the inn, and having se-

cured the two best rooms, one for the princess and her attendant, the other for himself and Chow, he gave the bird's nests to the wife of the innkeeper for the use of the ladies.

As for themselves, the boys made a good meal, and then whiled the time away in conversation till it became dark, when they both sought their beds; which, queer as it may seem to you—being nothing but piles of bricks shaped to the human form, and heated from beneath with charcoal, the flame and heat of which are dispersed by pipes joined to an upright tube, which carries the smoke through the roof—they greatly enjoyed after their long journey.

The next morning Nicholas visited the princess, and to his surprise and delight found that she had recovered her strength. "This is indeed joy, O my princess!" said he, kneeling; when, taking him by the hand, the royal lady said, "Kneel not before her whom thou hast so much befriended, O noble youth; for it is naught but the poor fatherless girl La-Loo who is before thee, and would indeed be thy sister."

"This is not possible; the daughter of the Ming can never be less in the world than its princess—first in beauty as in rank," said Nicholas.

"The daughter of the Ming, or the girl La-Loo, be she whom she may, noble youth, will travel alone through this dreary province in search of her brother, if she can not journey as thy sister."

"Then be it so, for thy servant dares not disobey, O beautiful La-Loo!" said Nicholas; adding, "Is it the will of the princess, to proceed upon her journey?"

"The will of her adopted brother is the will of La Loo," replied the princess, and Nicholas left the room; but pushing the door before him, imagine his surprise to find the innkeeper at the threshhold with his little head upward, his short arms stretched forward from his great body, and his legs in the hands of Chow, who appeared to be pulling him from the door.

"Release thy mean servant from the hands of this vile person, O noble youth, or his legs will be pulled as easily from his body as those of a crab," said the man, piteously looking in the face of Nicholas.

"The rascal, the rogue, the elephant in size, but mouse in honesty, was listening to thy conversation, O my master," said Chow.

"Let the mean rat rise upon his bamboo legs," said Nicholas; adding, "What has the dog learned of his guests' affairs.?"

"Truly so grand a mien could belong to none but the son of a king, and so beautiful a lady, could be none other than a princess," said the man.

"Thou rascal," said Nicholas; but adding, more prudently, "Canst thou be honest, and serve us?"

"For ever, O noble youth," replied the innkeeper.

"Trust not so small a mouse," said Chow.

"The innkeeper shall be rewarded according to his merits. Let him conduct his guest to the merchants of the town, and he shall receive some silver," said Nicholas, quitting the house with the man, who led him to the various dealers and merchants, from whom he purchased a camel, a mule, a tent, provision, and

in short all things necessary for a long journey overland.

When he had made these purchases, he whispered some secret instruction in the ear of Chow, and sent him with the animals and articles back to the inn; after which he said, "Will the worthy innkeeper open his lips in a temple, and promise to keep to himself the secret he has discovered?"

Truly the noble youth does not doubt that the words of his servant are straight?" replied the man, evasively.

"The worthy innkeeper must do this, or forfeit these two ounces of silver," replied Nicholas, exhibiting the money, which had the desired effect.

"There is but one temple for this poor town, and that is upon the mountain without the walls."

"To that we will proceed, if the worthy innkeeper will show the way."

The man obeyed; they passed through the gates of the town into a narrow road, which led them to the foot of a high mountain, near the summit of which stood a small temple.

"It would be better to seek an altar within the inner apartments of thy servant's inn, the gods would be equally as attentive to his promise, and the noble youth would be saved the necessity of climbing so steep a hill."

"Truly this temple can not be used often, or some easier means of ascent would be made," said Nicholas.

"The words of the noble youth are wise, for truly this temple is but used on the festivals of the first of the month."

"When is the next festival, O worthy innkeeper?"

"To-morrow."

"Then ascend."

Obeying, the innkeeper commenced climbing the narrow and slippery stairs cut in the hill side; when they reached the top and stood in the temple before a huge wooden god, who seemed to form part of the back wall of the temple, out of which he had been cut, Nicholas, pointing to one of the arms of the idol, said, "Truly, the god hath been neglected and requires painting." Turning his back to Nicholas to examine the idol, the man gave a shriek of alarm. Nicholas had taken a cord from his vest, thrown it over his arms, and made him as harmless as if he had been in a straight jacket.

"What means the youth; is he a robber?"

"Silence thou ungrateful hog," said Nicholas, pulling him toward the idol, to which he secured his body, legs and arms.

"Now, thou dog, open thy lips, and say what fell into thine ears whilst thou wast listening at the door of the ladies' apartments."

"Truly, thy mean servant could not hear much, for little was said by the princess."

"Then how, thou trembling rogue, couldst tho know it was a princess who spoke?"

"Thy servant divined that the lady must be of exalted rank; for in the first place, had she not been a great lady escaping from the province of Pekin, she would not have crossed the gulf in such weather, neither would so noble a youth as thyself have treated a sister with such exalted respect."

"Thou art a cunning dog, whose words are dust; and if thou dost not admit that thy vile ears were at that door before the time when thou wert caught, I will slay thee," said Nicholas, drawing his short sword, and holding it threateningly.

"Pardon, O noble youth; but as iron can not resist the lode-stone, neither can the ears of thy servant resist a secret: he did—did listen," said the man trembling with fear.

"What didst thou hear, dog?" the sword was now at his throat.

"That the Emperor Wey-t-song was slain, and that the Emperor Li had offered a great reward for the Princess of the Mings."

Should I kill thee, thou mean rat, thou wouldst but meet thy merits."

"The magnanimous youth would not soil his sword with the blood of so mean a person."

"No; but thou shalt remain here till we are beyond the reach of harm from thy vile tongue."

"Surely the noble youth would not starve so ill-conditioned a person," said the man in a whining tone. "Thou art now safe, thou rogue, and I will pay thee the two taels I promised; but if even when released from thy bondage when the temple is visited to-morrow, thou speak but the name of the lady you have seen, I will return and punish thee, if it is years to come." So saying Nicholas threw the silver upon the floor, closed the door of the temple, descended the mountain, and made as much haste as possible back to the inn.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN OVERLAND JOURNEY.—ATTACKED BY WOLVES, AND STOPPED BY A SERPENT.

By the time Nicholas returned to the inn, Chow had prepared every thing for their departure; the camel was laden with a litter for the two ladies, behind which were two tents, rough sleeping mats, furs and a supply of food and fuel.

"All is prepared, O noble Nicholas, according to thy order," said Chow.

"Thou art as nimble as thou art brave, Chow," said Nicholas, passing to the room of the princess, whom he found with the mother of Chow well wrapped in furs.

"It is well that thou art prepared, O beautiful and illustrious La-Loo, for the villain innkeeper heard our conversation, and I doubt not intended to earn the rebel Li-Kong's reward." At this the limbs of the princess trembled, and her face became pale with fear.

"Let us haste then, O noble brother, for La-Loo fears that demon Li-Kong, and would rather that her parent's blow had proved effective than fall into his power."

"The weather is severe and the journey drear, and fraught with dangers of savage beasts and still more

savage men," said Nicholas, as fearful of the danger of proceeding as of remaining; "adding, "At least the innkeeper can not return till to-morrow, and early morning would be less dangerous than the darkness of this winter's night."

"The last of the line of the great Tait-sou have the courage of their ancestors. Let us on our journey, my brother said the princess.

Without another word Nicholas led the princess and her attendant to the camel, and assisted them into the litter.

"Surely," said La-Loo, "there are times when women should have the courage of men. An arrow sped by my hand would be as useful as one from the bow of my brother."

Understanding the meaning Nicholas gave the princess his own bow, and quiver full of arrows.

"Truly my venerable and beloved parent can pull a bow-string to save her life," said Chow giving his bow and arrows to his mother.

"This is not well, Chow, for we are left unarmed, except with our short swords, which will be of little use," said Nicholas.

"The noble Nicholas left Chow to provide for the journey, and so, knowing that female arms, like female tongues, can fight when the time comes, he provided weapons for each," said Chow, taking two bows from the sides of the mule.

"Thou hast the wisdom and foresight of a colao, O Chow," said Nicholas, laughing; then adding, seriously, "But the guide."

"Is here, O noble stranger, and as he hopes to have his tomb well dusted, will conduct thee safely to the distant mountains," said a youth, stepping forward with an unlighted torch in his hand.

Nicholas then mounting behind the camel, Chow upon the mule, and the guide taking hold of the cord which was tied to the great animal's mouth, they proceeded on their journey, and as it was just within the time of closing the gates, they passed out of the town into the open country of teas and drugs; and so quickly did they travel, that before night came on they had reached a narrow gorge between two mountains, which was good, inasmuch as they would be protected from the keen winds. The darkness came on, and the guide lighted his torch, which flamed so terrifically, that they might have passed for one of our slow night trains.

"So for some hours they traveled, till they came to a forest so dense with trees that the guide would go no further, and they pitched the two tents, one for the ladies, and the other for themselves, surrounding both with a great fire, made of stubble, to keep off the wolves or other beasts of prey. The following morning they resumed their journey, till as they were leaving the forest, they could hear the distant howling of wolves; the camel exhibited its fright by making strange noises, and the mule grew restless, snorted, and every now and then turned its head as if to look for its enemies. The whole party fixed arrows in their bows, ready for an attack, and for some time their hearts palpitated with alarm. Ordering

the little caravan to stop, Nicholas sent Chow to examine the probability of an attack. He had been absent half an hour when they heard the trampling of horses near at hand. What could it mean? surely they were not pursued? Then came Chow, who, running forward, said, "We are lost, O my master, for there are banditti near."

"On my brother, on, for these rogues are doubtless the troops of the rebel Li-Kong," exclaimed the princess, as she leant forward from the litter with the bent bow in her hand; and onward they went, with open ears, and as noiselessly as possible; passing along the side of a mountain into which the wood opened, till they came to a gorge, when the guide stopped, and proposed that they should make a *détour*, in order to avoid the passage of the mountain platform.

"It is not possible, my master; for to the right are the banditti, to the left the wolves. Let us keep onward and dare this platform;" and again they proceeded through the gorge. Still the wolves kept up their dreary howling, and the trampling of the banditti, if banditti they were, seemed at no greater distance from them than the animals; at length they passed through the gorge, when a sight was before them that would have caused the stoutest hearts to quail. There, leading from the gorge, was the platform of which the guide had spoken. It was supported by rafters, which stood out some six feet from the rock, a mere shelf, without edge or railing, at least five hundred feet above the level of the sea, which the mountain skirted.

"It would be death to cross with these animals; we must turn back and make the *détour*," said the guide.

"Open thy ears. We dare not, O noble Nicholas," said Chow! "for the wolves are upon us."

"Onward, my brother, for there are sounds of more terrible beasts than wolves. Let us trust ourselves in the hands of Providence," said the princess.

Seeing the knees of the guide knocking together with fear, Nicholas said, "Get thee to the rear, and follow the mule, thou coward;" then, dismounting, he caught hold of the reins in the nostrils of the camels and averting his eyes from the chasm beneath, led the sure-footed beast along the platform. They had reached midway, when the wolves, with a howling concert, made their appearance at the commencement of the platform; and as Chow, who brought up the rear, led the mule, he felt the animal tremble, and fearing that if the wild brutes ventured across the platform the terrified beasts would be the means of precipitating the whole party into the abyss, he trembled with anxiety. It was a fearful situation, but the brave youth retaining his presence of mind, crept to the flanks of the mule, and only in time, for one of the wolves who had ventured along the platform, followed by the pack, received an arrow in his brain, and as he rolled over into the abyss beneath, its companions stood with their fore feet stretched forward, and their ears bent, as if astonished, when another arrow flew among them, but so intent had Chow become in this fight, that he was un-

conscious that the progress of the rest of the party had been stopped midway. For the cause of this we must return to Nicholas; who, as he led the camel, to his horror, saw issuing from a fissure in the rock the head of a serpent of the most venomus kind. He fixed an arrow in his bow, but a moment's thought, and he dared not fire, for should he miss the reptile it would be upon them instantly. What should he do? His sword—yes—he drew it; but then he dared not leave the camel's head, and he called to Chow, little thinking that he was in a more terrible position than himself.

"Let fly thy arrow, my brother; should you miss, here is my bow," said the princess, leaning forward.

Still Nicholas would not move. The situation was fearful; the wolves on one side, the deadly serpent on the other; indeed words are wanting to paint the dread anxiety and terror of all, even the animals who stood transfixed, with their hearts beating against their sides in the agony of fear.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SAVED BY A MUSK-DEER.—STORIES OF WONDERFUL MOUNTAINS.

Relief came, but so imperceptibly that it stole over them. A perfume so strong filled the air that the animals coughed, the great snake writhed, and approached nearer to them; they were lost; no, the perfume had entered the nostrils of the reptile; its movement was languid, another second, and their deliverer appeared. It was a musk-deer, or roe-buck, who had pursued the serpent till it had lost it in the fissure for a few minutes only, when, recovering its trail, the deer had pursued it to the platform, where, with one grip at its neck, it killed it, when, startled at the cavalcade, it retraced its steps, not at all to the regret of Nicholas, for, valuable as the musk animal was, his gratitude was too great to have killed it. Having crossed the platform, Nicholas saw the predicament of Chow, who was still employed in keeping the wolves at bay. He had fired many arrows, yet had killed but three, while others sat crouching, as if neither liking to recede or advance, waiting, in fact, for the boy's back to be turned, before they made an attack; so keeping poor Chow in one terrible position, not daring to turn his back or to fire his

last remaining arrow, for fear that it should miss. The tables, however, were turned, when Nicholas, followed by the guide, both with fixed bows, came to his rescue; one flight more from the three bows, and the now terrified beasts scampered off, when Chow returned to the other side of the platform with Nicholas, and the whole party offered up thanks to Heaven for their miraculous preservation.

It is in the mountains of Pe-tche-Lee that the musk-deer is generally found by hunters, who find a good market, not only for the musk, but the body, which is in great esteem; and that I may account to you in a reasonable manner for the providential escape of the travelers, I must tell you that the flesh of serpents is the favorite and most common food of this roe-buck, who kills them with ease, however large or numerous; for no sooner does he come near than the serpent becomes overpowered with the scent of the musk; and so well is this fact known to the mountaineers, that when they go to cut wood or make charcoal in the mountains, they carry about their persons a few grains of this musk, and rest and sleep without fear from the venomous snakes, which might otherwise destroy them.

The travelers resumed their journey, and continued till it became dark, when they pitched their tents upon an open plain, lighted a circle of fire around their encampment, and remained for the night; so, for at least three months, they continued this tedious journey, keeping within a few miles of the sea-coast, through mountains, plains and forests, till they reach-

ed a small village, at the base of the mountain cham of Lao-yang, where they were once more enabled to rest beneath the roof of a house, without fear of traitors, for Lao-yang was the head-quarters of the governor and general of the province, Woo-san-Kwei.

As they were passing the ridges of these mountains, the guide kept his eyes fixed upon their green sides, as if in deep thought. "Surely my brother can see nothing wonderful in these tree-growing hills," said Chow.

Thy mean servant was dreaming of his native province, of which these mountains reminded him, although compared with those of my native Chen-si they are dirt heaps."

"The mountains of my brother's province of Chen-si are doubtless great, but they are mole-hills to those of Fokien, where thy unworthy brother was born," said Chow.

"Why, what words are these? Does not the whole world know that Chen-si has a mountain of the shape of a cock, and which sometimes crows so loud that it may be heard for ten miles?"

"Fokien has a mountain which is so high that its summit can not be seen, and foretells storms by moving its great body to and fro like a tree with the wind."

"It is a dirt-hill compared to another in Chen-si, that at the sound of a drum breathes forth fire and flame."

"Rat's flesh! thy mountain is nothing to the good

hill of Fokien, which makes thieves so giddy when they gaze upon it, that they drop down their plunder and run for their lives," said Chow.

"That may be useful, my brother, but how can its qualities be compared to another of my mountains, which has the power of conferring immortality upon all who live thereon?" replied the guide.

"It is even of doubtful merit compared to the mountain of Fokien, which has grown into the exact shape of the god Fo, and is so large that its eyes are three miles round, and its nose ten miles long." The guide having no other on his list, turned sulkily aside, and so ended this conversation, which, I may tell you, did not spring from the imaginations of either, for the assertions on both sides are accredited by the people of China.

Delighted at the probability of their being near the end of their journey, and as much so at the prospect of a few days' rest, you may imagine the dismay of the party at being awakened early the next morning by a great tumult. What could it mean? They were not long in doubt, for the master of the inn came to them with tears in his eyes. "Arise, O worthy strangers, this is an unfortunate day for us all; the thieves, the rats of the ocean have landed," said he.

"What words are these, O worthy friend?" said Nicholas, jumping to his feet.

"The Emperor Li is marching a great army to besiege Lao-yang, where the great Woo-san-Kwei is encamped; but far worse, the sea wasps have landed

within a day's journey, and are scouring the country, joined by the rogues and thieves of the province, and the people are flying with what goods they can collect to the places of refuge; if the noble stranger is wise he will follow," said the man, leaving the room to make preparation for the departure of himself and family.

Of the places of refuge, of which the man spoke, there were many in the province of Leao-tong. Some were in the open plains, encompassed by strong walls, and entrenched ditches of great depth; others were erected upon the summits of mountain crags, and approachable only by great ladders, or secret steps in the rock.

Fearing for the safety of the princess, Nicholas lost no time in securing the aid of the innkeeper, who, for a handsome present, and in compassion for the ladies, offered to secure them a safe asylum. So when the greater portion of the terrified inhabitants of the terrified inhabitants of the little hamlet had fled to their different places of refuge, taking with them the bulk of their property, the innkeeper, placing his wife and daughter in a cart, led the way through a defile of the mountain, and many times was he stopped by his flying neighbors, who implored of him to seek a safer place than the open mountains, where the rogues could so easily follow. Keeping steadily along the ridge, while they were in sight, the last had no sooner disappeared than he turned through a great cleft, just large enough for the cart and camel to pass, when, pointing to a crag which hung over

the summit, at a great height, he said, "The rogues will not reach us there."

"Are we birds, that we can fly?" said Chow, with astonishment.

When they had proceeded some distance through the opening, they came to another and narrower cleft, cut out of its sides, to pass through which they were compelled to unharness the mules and camel, when they entered a wide, open space, like a courtyard.

"Even now we want wings, my brother," said Chow, shuddering, as he gazed upward at the great height.

"Our wings are here," said the man, turning aside what appeared to be a huge block of rock, but was only an ingenious imitation, when before them they was a flight of steps, steep, and so narrow, that they looked as if the ascent would squeeze a fat man a a foot taller.

However, pleased at the discovery of such a place of refuge, they did not stop to examine it, but passed onward; the princess first, and the other women followed by the men, who carried articles of food. fuel, or raiment with them. Having reached the uppermost step, they crept through a hole large enough only for one person, and found themselves in one large room, the roof of which was indeed the summit of the rock. In the walls were small loopholes, from which could be seen many miles of country; there was also a large space in one side for a fire, which was immediately made use of by Chow, who had carried the fuel. Then the guide was sent to fetch other

matters, after which they all sat down upon their mats, and partook of hot tea and rice cakes.

"Truly this is a wonderful place," said Nicholas, who, although he knew that places of refuge were common in all the frontier provinces, had no notion of their real strength and security.

"See," said the man, pointing to some huge stones near the entrance, and some heavy bars of iron hanging upon the walls, "should the dogs discover our retreat, they may be crushed as small as tea-dust."

"Truly they could but starve us out."

"Not so, noble youth," said the man pointing to a massive slab of rock; and adding, "This is a door and leads to another part of the mountain."

"Truly our ancestors were wise."

"Necessity made them so, O youth; for two thousand years this border province has been invaded at intervals by the Tartar barbarians."

When night came on, the men of the party descended to the cavern beneath, the women kept to the turret, and were rocked to sleep by the roaring wind, which brought to them the flame, smoke, and sparks, from below. They, however, were secure, although the enraged rogues had made a bonfire of their village—and they slept.

CHAPTER XXXV.

TREACHERY OF THE GUIDE.—THE PRINCESS SEIZED BY ROBBERS.

After a sojourn of three days in this hiding-place their provisions grew short; moreover, it was probable that the enemy had left the village, if, indeed, they had not taken their departure upon the first day; therefore, it was arranged that one of the party should proceed upon a tour of observation, and as the guide not only volunteered, but from his profession seemed to be the most fitting person, he was sent. After an absence of some hours, he brought them the information that not only had the enemy left the neighborhood, but there was plenty of game at hand, the great proof of which was the carcass of a yellow goat that he carried across his shoulders; and so joyful was Nicholas at the news, that he proposed their immediate departure.

"It would not be wise, O my young friend, for these thieves are artful, and may be only lurking nea till they can pounce upon us like tigers; said the inn keeper.

"This advice being reasonable, and, fearing more for the princess than himself, Nicholas readily agreed

to remain for a few more days; but then, tired of confinement, and knowing that one small kid would be insufficient, he took his bow in his hands, saying, "Leave not this place, O Chow, till I return."

"This may not be, O my master, for while here, there are two men, and a strong room to protect the ladies; among the hills it will be as much as two can do to protect each other from strolling thieves," said Chow; which reasonable view, being supported by the princess and the innkeeper, Nicholas was compelled, although against his will, to comply with; and so the two youths started off in company.

Along mountain ridges, through valleys, and up steep crags, they toiled for some hours without meeting man or beast. At length, however, as they crossed a small hill covered with trees there was a rustling among the underwood, and they heard the grunt of some animal. "It is a boar, prepare thy bow," said Nicholas.

"No, no, master, no; he is running from us," said Chow, who was upon higher ground and could see better. "See," he added, as Nicholas came by his side, "he is sniffing something good; what can it be?" For a minute they watched the animal, who was quietly sniffing the ground near a small opening of the mountain. "See, he seeks the entrance, we must not lose him," said Nicholas; and in another minute the boar fell over with an arrow in his side when, drawing his sword, Nicholas ran up to it. The animal, however, was too quick, for instead of being unduly alarmed at the sudden attack, like

a sensible beast, he had, with his teeth, plucked the arrow from his body; an operation he effected so quickly, that before Nicholas could stop, the boar met him half-way, tripped him over, and, placing his huge paws upon the boy's face, would speedily have killed him, but for another arrow which Chow had sent through the brute's thick neck.

"That was a good aim, my brave Chow," said Nicholas, as he arose, and passed his sword through the beast.

"The obstinacy of thy servant in coming with thee was good, O noble Nicholas."

"Thou shalt be rewarded with a leg, at least," said Nicholas.

"Thus satisfied with their foraging expedition, they carried the animal between them till they came within a short distance of the refuge, when they stopped to rest; but, starting suddenly Chow said, "Let us listen;" and both put their ears to the ground. "Surely, it is plain, it is the trampling of a large party of horse," replied Nicholas, rising to his feet and running up a steep hill, "still there is nothing to be seen, no living being—yet," he added, "it was the trampling of horses."

"It can not be otherwise," said Chow.

"Let us haste, then, O Chow!" and leaving the carcass of the boar upon the ground, they ran till they reached the cavern. The camel and mules were gone—their worst fears were confirmed; and Nicholas ascended the stairs, followed by Chow, entered the room, when involuntarily placing his hand upon his

forehead, as if to assist his astonished vision, he gave a scream of horror.

As for Chow, for a minute his astonishment deprived him of speech; then, falling upon his face, he exclaimed, "My beloved mother!"

Well might they be horrified, for the princess and her attendant were absent; the innkeeper, his wife and daughter, and the guide, were bound with cords and gagged, so that they could neither move nor speak.

While Nicholas released the innkeeper, Chow performed a like office for the women, when they all fell upon the guide, thumping him with their fists, kicking him with their feet, and exclaiming, "Thou rat, thou snake, thou shalt be strangled." As for the miserable fellow, with his limbs bound and his mouth gagged, he could do nothing but roll his eyes at them. Then being released by Nicholas, he would have got upon his legs but for Chow, who threw him upon his back, and, stamping his foot upon his breast, cried, "Lie there, thou dog, for thou art the villain."

"It is not so, Chow, or he would not himself be so bound and gagged," said Nicholas.

"Nevertheless, he is the traitor; he it was who brought the soldiers upon us, who discovered our retreat," said the innkeeper, giving the prostrate rogue another kick.

"Open thy lips, thou rascal; say what has become of the two ladies, or I will slay thee," said Nicholas.

"Speak, thou rogue," said Chow, almost breathless with anxiety.

"Truly it was the misfortune and not the crime of

thy servant; for had he not been chosen as thy guide, this thing could not have happened," replied the trembling fellow.

"Open thy lips to a purpose, thou rogue; give me a clue to the track of these robbers, and thy life shall be spared," said Nicholas, more anxious to rescue the princess than to punish the guide, who, gaining courage from the promise, said, "Truly, then, the princess is on her way to the camp of the Emperor."

This was too much for Nicholas, who fell upon the man, and would have killed him, but for Chow, who, in his turn, becoming more calm, said, "Let the rogue earn his life by enabling us to follow these thieving rats."

Perceiving the wisdom of this, Nicholas removed his hand from the throat of the rogue, who said, "Truly this is a heavy misfortune; for till thy servant left this place, he intended no mischief, when in the mountains he met with a party of soldiers, who have been pursuing us all the way from Kin-Chow for the purpose of earning the reward offered for the princess."

"How is this possible, thou rogue?" said Nicholas.

"On the day of the festival, these soldiers landed on their way to gather troops for the service of the Emperor Li, whom they were ordered to join on the borders of the province; on the same day that thy outrage upon the person of my uncle, the innkeeper of Kin-Chow, was discovered, and the venerable man in his indignation told the soldiers that the princess, for whom so large a reward was offered, was on the

road to Lao-yang, accompanied by a woman, two youths, and his nephew, who might be known by the name of Leang, and who would, doubtless, when he heard of the affront put upon his uncle, aid in capturing the whole party. The soldiers, anxious to obtain the reward, pressed forward with such haste, that, but for our crossing the platform, they would have overtaken us," said the guide; adding, "And would that they had, for then thy servant would have been innocent."

"If innocent, then, thou rogue, what hath since caused thee to become a traitor," said Nicholas.

"When the soldiers informed the nephew of the affront offered to his venerable uncle, how under heaven and the social laws could he refuse to aid in the punishment of such offenders?"

"How came it, O thou great rogue, that the soldiers should repay thy great services with so much ingratitude?"

"Truly thy mean servant is not a god, that he can foresee the ingratitude of mankind."

"These are dog's words, O noble youth," said the innkeeper; adding, "This fellow had promised the thieves to keep thee under some pretence till they came up, when they intended to have sold thee as a slave; and finding that they had missed a portion of their expected prize, partly in their rage, and partly that the rogue should not claim a portion of the reward, they first beat and then left him as you found him, not doubting that upon your return you would kill so false a rascal."

"Shall we not kill the traitor, who has stolen my beloved mother and the princess?" said Chow, very fiercely.

"Truly we will do better—make him useful," said Nicholas; adding, "Is the rogue certain that these soldiers have proceeded to Lao-yang?"

"It must be so, for it is to that city the Emperor Li is marching to besiege the rebel Woo-san-Kwei," said the guide.

"Thou rascal, to call so great a thief an emperor, and so great a general a rebel," said Chow, menacing him with his fist; adding, as he again bound his arms to his side, "Thou shalt at least be in safe keeping till either the princess be discovered, or thy day arrives to be strangled."

The excitement past, then came despair. The soldiers had stolen the mules and camel; it was, therefore, useless to attempt to overtake them, even if their numbers had been sufficiently large. What was to be done? and they both sat with their heads upon their hands. Nothing! At length Nicholas said, "Bring the rogue with us, we will seek the General Woo-san-Kwei."

"The roads are dangerous, and may be filled with rebels," said the innkeeper.

"Then must we fight our way through the vermin," said Nicholas.

"This rogue shall go before and get the first sword in his wretched body," said Chow, jerking the rope by which he held the guide, whose teeth chattered together with terror at the notion.

Then telling the innkeeper where to find the dead boar, Nicholas bade him and his family farewell.

"May the great Tien aid thee!" said the woman.

"Leave us thy name, O noble youth, that it may be marked on the memories of our descendants," said the innkeeper.

Nicholas took the man aside, and whispered in his ear.

"It is a terrible name," said the man, bowing his head to the ground.

"It is a good one, and the son will restore thee thy village, O worthy man, if the rebels take not his life," said Nicholas.

"The princess, the princess, and my beloved mother," exclaimed Chow.

"Are protected by Heaven till we rescue them from the hands of the villain Li," said Nicholas, and they proceeded on their journey

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ONCE MORE PRISONERS, BUT WITH FRIENDS—THE GUIDE'S MISTAKE.

WITH sorrowful hearts the two boys took leave of he houseless family, and proceeded along the ridges of the mountains till they came to the entrance of a great wood. Chow had custody of the guide, whom he held by the rope, and pressed forward or jerked backward, as his sense of indignation at the loss of his mother arose or subsided. At times he would so slacken the rope that the man could scarcely feel his thraldom; then again, when he thought of the hopelessness of again recovering his mother, he would clench his teeth and pull it so violently, that the miserable guide would fall backward; whereupon Chow would say, "Get thee upon thy bamboo legs, thou rogue, or I will drag thee like a bale of demon's goods, as thou art;" and the fat body of the coward would shake like a blanc-mange, rise upon its legs, and commence a trot, when, after a little while, Chow would give another tug at the rope, saying, as the man tottered backward, "O, thou wouldst escape, wouldst thou, thou mouse of fat measure, who hath stolen the cream of our lives?"

"Truly thy servant has been unfortunate, O noble

youth, yet if his body is shaken like a jelly of cold soup, he cannot guide thee through this city of trees."

"The rogue's words are good, Chow, we cannot find our way through these trees without his aid," said Nicholas; adding, "Fasten the rope around thy arm, so that he cannot slip from thy hands."

"Truly the advice of my master is good," said Chow; and as they were then passing through a thick copse, he fastened the rope around his own body, saying, "Now, thou rat, honesty will for once reverse things, and take its place behind roguery, for surely I hear footsteps, and should they be those of thieves, thy thick head may serve to blunt the points of their arrows."

The sounds were unmistakable, and the guide fell backward, trembling so violently that he could not walk, till, taking hold of his shoulders, Chow pushed him forward, saying, "On, thou coward, on;" and so they went along the narrow path, till the sounds became more distinct. Then a voice shouted to them, "stop!" when, trembling more than ever, the guide threw one shoulder backward, and one foot forward, in order to prop himself against the propelling Chow, at the same time exclaiming, "Stay, O generous youth,—for the love of Fo, stay!—or the body of thy servant will become a cushion for arrow-heads."

"Silence, thou dog," said Nicholas; adding in a whisper to Chow, "Let us remain quiet, for doubtless it is some thief."

Then came the twang of a bow, and an arrow flew by, in its flight clipping the ear of the miserable

guide, who, now fairly frightened out of his senses, twisted round like a teetotum, and fell upon the ground, carrying Chow with him, exclaiming, "These are the thieves, these are the thieves, O honorable war tiger."

And before Chow had disengaged himself from the rogue, they were all three dragged into an open glade, where they found themselves surrounded by a party of cavalry, the guide upon the ground trembling, and Nicholas and Chow with their arms folded defiantly.

"Who are the dogs? what their names, surnames, and rank?" said the officer.

"Travelers who have no fear of rebel rogues," replied Nicholas dauntlessly, believing them to be troops of Li-Kong.

"Take my life, but save that of my venerable mother," said Chow, in a similar belief.

"These rogues are robbers, who would take a faithful and valiant subject of the great Emperor Li-Kong a prisoner to the town of the thief Woo-san-Kwei," said the guide, jumping upon his feet, with a most warlike mien, knowing that if with the soldier's of Li-Kong he was with friends.

"What means the slave? Who art thou, thou empty rice tub?" said the officer.

"It may please the fierce tiger of war to be amused at the person of his servant; but if he be a rice-tub, he can serve the Emperor."

"Emperor!—what Emperor, thou ox?" said the officer.

"The great Li,—may he live ten thousand years."

"Thy name, surname, and rank?" said the officer.

"The mean name of thy insignificant servant is Leang, and he is the unworthy nephew of Ling, the innkeeper, of Kin-Chow," replied the guide, not doubting that he was in the hands of rebel troopers.

"Then truly, Leang, the unworthy nephew of Ling, is a dangerous though a comical rogue."

"The noble tiger of war is pleased——"

"To have thee strangled with thine own girdle for being a follower of the great thief Li-Kong," said the officer; adding, as he turned to his soldiers, "Let this be done."

At this unexpected result, the terribly mistaken guide's face became paler and longer, and falling upon his knees, he said, "Let the magnificent commander be generous to an insignificant and withered mouse, who is nothing but a poor and faithful guide, as these noble youths, whom he hath conducted all the way from Kin-Chow to the town of the great Woo-san-Kwei, can testify."

"Bend thy neck at the name of the great prince, thou rogue," said the officer, striking him on the back with his sword, and the guide fell flat—that is, as nearly so as his protuberant stomach would permit—when the officer added laughingly, "Truly the animal is fat enough to kill at once; yet, as the rebels may cause us a siege so long that we may be short of provender for our horses, let him be kept in a strong cage till that time arrives" then beckoning

to a soldier, the latter seized the horrified guide and tied him before him on his saddle.

Then turning to Nicholas and Chow, who, notwithstanding their serious position, had been laughing heartily at the merited misery of the guide, the officer said, "Are the rogue's words truth? Do my brothers seek the presence of the great Woo-san-Kwei?" Then when Nicholas had related to the officer the whole of their adventures from Kin-Chow) alone prudentially keeping back the fact that the lady of high rank was the princess, he said, "What were the numbers of these rogues?"

"There could have been no less than twenty, O noble commander," said Nicholas.

Then turning to his second-in-command, the officer said, "Let the rogue of a guide be kept tied before thee on thy saddle, O Ching; take fifty horsemen, and return not to the camp till thou bringest these ladies with thee. If the rogue of a guide directs thee so that thou art successful, he shall be rewarded; if not, strangled."

"Will not the noble commander let these horsemen be placed under the charge of his younger brother, who truly hath the greater right to bring these rogues to punishment?" said Nicholas, imploringly.

"This may not be, my brother; for, although I doubt not thy honesty, it would be at the risk of my life that I let thee pass from my sight till thou hadst been taken before the prince."

Although vexed that the chance of rescuing the princess, and punishing the soldiers who had made

her prisoner, had been denied to him, Nicholas felt too well pleased at the slightest possibility of her being rescued, to complain; and, therefore, without another word, the boys followed the troops upon their march to Lao-yang, not by any means regretting that they had fallen into the hands of this foraging party of Woo-san-Kwei's army.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

INTERVIEW WITH THE GENERAL.—NICHOLAS CAUSES SOLDIERS TO BE SENT IN SEARCH OF THE PRINCESS.

UNLIKE any place Nicholas had seen since he left his father's fleet, Lao-yang exhibited sure signs of the determination and energy of its commanders. Surrounded by a deep ditch of great width, its formidable walls were manned at every point with the picked and most disciplined men from the northern provinces—soldiers who had been fighting for many years against the invading Tartars—and armed to the teeth with swords, cross-bows, shields, helmets, and breast and back plates. At short distances were planted small brass cannon, or bombards, which, although they had been set aside for so many years that the art of using them had become forgotten, Woo-san-Kwei had not only brought again into use, but taught his troops to serve effectually. Then, again, although the matchlock men were fewer than upon the walls of Pekin, they had been so well exercised in the use of that weapon that they could handle it nearly as well as bows and arrows,—a great matter at that period, as you will understand when I tell you that some few years previously, when matchlocks were first introduced, to defend a frontier town

against the Tartars, the latter were so much astonished at a weapon which possessed the magic power of slaying them at so great a distance, that they fled in dismay, when, making a sortie, or onset, the Chinese destroyed many thousands. The next assault, however, the Tartars provided their front ranks with shields of wood, so large and thick, that they were as safe from bullets, as they would have been behind walls, consequently the fire of the Chinese proved useless; moreover, before they could reload, the second rank of the Tartars scaled the walls and fell upon them so quickly, that even those who had time to load handled their pieces so clumsily and nervously that the rebound knocked them over, and the whole garrison were killed. This affair so disgusted the Chinese with the matchlock, that henceforward they kept it more as a matter of show, or to use when there was no chance of coming to close quarters, than as a regular weapon of war.

With greater foresight, the General Woo-san-Kwei had not only re-adopted the weapon, but, by incessant practice, and offerings of rewards and promotion to those who exhibited peculiar dexterity, he succeeded in forming a good body of matchlock men.

When they had passed through the gates, the officer left Nicholas and Chow to amuse themselves as best they might, while he proceeded to report the arrival of himself and his prisoners (for in that light he regarded them) to the prince general.

Had Nicholas entrusted his name, or that of the

princess, to the officer, there can be no doubt that the general would have granted him an immediate interview; as it was, he had to wait till the following day. Previously, however, to seeking the audience, he went to the great square, where, to his surprise, he saw a large body of troops drawn out under arms, with their banners and wind instruments, as if to receive some important personage, and officers were galloping to and fro between the palace and the great gates. The meaning of all this puzzled him. Truly it would be unfortunate if Woo-san-Kwei should be about to take his departure upon some expedition. The riddle, was, however, soon explained; for, even while he was pondering, the general's own body-guard passed to the gate; when, drawing themselves up on either side, a noble-looking horseman, followed by a train of some twenty others, rode into the city, and was escorted to the palace; but, great as this personage evidently was, the Chinese soldiers kept a dread and sullen silence, making no movement except to involuntarily clutch the triggers of their pieces, or the strings of their bows. As for Nicholas, he stared with astonishment, grasped the hilt of his sword—the sight was indeed extraordinary. A Mantchou prince and his train of Tartars, those most dreaded enemies of the empire, within the very palace of the barbarian-subduing general, not in chains, but as a friend, received with honor.

Indignant at the sight, Nicholas rudely grasped the arm of a soldier, saying, "Can my brother tell a stranger how it is that such barbarian thieves are

within these walls? Surely the kid does not invite the wolf to its own bosom!"

"Would my brother keep his head upon his shoulders and not be thrown from the walls like a dead rat, he will not seek to know the barbarian-exterminating general's secrets," said the surly soldier; adding, however, directly afterward, "The Tartar dogs may have come to offer their submission."

Whatever might have been the business of the Tartar prince with the Chinese general, it did not last an hour, for in less than that time he left the city, and shortly after the officer who had brought Nicholas into the town conducted him to the presence of the general, who, in full military costume, surrounded by a great number of officers, was standing (a rare thing for a Chinese grandee) at a table, busily engaged in examining some papers.

Having performed the same ceremony of running up the middle of the apartment, and bowing to the ground, as at an audience of the Emperor, he awaited the command of the prince to rise, which being given, Woo-san-Kwei no sooner saw his features than he said, "This is indeed a fortunate day, that brings to us the son of Chin-Chi-Loong. Thy presence, bold youth, is welcome; yet," he added sternly, "so brave a servant should have died defending his imperial master."

"The silken voice of the illustrious general is music to his servant, whose words must not fall into the ears of all," replied Nicholas, glancing at the officers around.

"This is but wisdom, youth," replied the prince, motioning to the officers to withdraw from the apartment, after which he said, "Let the noble youth open his lips;" whereupon Nicholas gave a faithful recital of his adventures from the time that Woo-san-Kwei had himself left Pekin for the army. During the recital, the general listened attentively, at intervals giving vent to exclamations of surprise, rage, or approval. When, however, Nicholas related the escape of the princess, he said, warmly, "Noble youth, thy wisdom, like thy bravery, is beyond thy years; and when these rebel dogs have been swept from the earth, thou shalt have the kingdom that thy father seeketh." Then, when the enthusiasm of the moment had passed, bethinking himself, he said, "But truly the servant of the Mings forgets his duty to the daughter of his murdered Emperor; lead me to her, O youth."

Then Nicholas, for the first time in his life, trembled; an arrow through his heart would have been more welcome than that command, and falling upon his knees, as if he had betrayed a sacred trust, he said, "These words should be my last, O general. The princess is in the power of the rebel Li-Kong."

So like a thunder-clap did these words fall upon the mind of the Woo-san-Kwei, that for a moment he was speechless, but recovering himself, he said, "Thou dog, if these words are true thou shalt die;" but becoming calmer, he commanded Nicholas to finish his story, and when the youth had brought it up to the moment of the audience, the general said, "Thou art, indeed, a brave youth; but this rogue

Leang, knows he the road the woman thieves took?" Then, however, without waiting for an answer, and knowing that action was more likely to recover the princess and her attendant than useless sorrow or anger, he ordered the attendance of one of his officers, telling him to send out parties of soldiers in different directions in search of the princess.

Then Nicholas fell upon his knees, and prayed to lead the party himself.

"This cannot be, brave youth, for thou art too serviceable to have thy person risked in a province so wild that no stranger can journey through without a guide."

"Then, O illustrious prince, thy servant dares not meet the heavenly eyes of the Prince Yong-Li, in whose service he has undertaken this long journey," said Nicholas.

"Truly it was an unfortunate day for the son of Woo when he fell under the displeasure of the young Emperor, his royal master," said the general, gloomily.

"Can it be under heaven that Yong Li has forgotten the great services of his most illustrious general?"

"Such is his servant's misfortune," said the general.

"Then," said Nicholas, "let thy servant seek the young Emperor, and upon his knees pray of him to open his heavenly ears to the fragrant advice of the great Woo-san-Kwei."

"This cannot be, for his majesty (*may he continue the circle of succession*) has left Lao-yang in anger."

"This, then, is indeed an unfortunate day, O my

general," said Nicholas, with astonishment; adding, "Surely the cause must have been great for so much anger from so mild a prince."

"Let the noble youth open his ears, and he shall hear how this calamity fell out," said the general; adding, "When his majesty, after the death of his father, so happily escaped the hands of the great thief Li, he fled to the army of his servant, and desired that the whole of the Tartar-subduing army of Leaotong should be immediately led to Pekin for the purpose of destroying the rebels. Alas! the grief of the prince had destroyed his reason; the plan was not possible, for in my absence the barbarians would have overrun the northern province. Well, for a time the prince submitted to his servant's advice, till one day an envoy arrived from the dog Li, who commanded me to proclaim him Emperor throughout the province, offering, as the price of my obedience, a kingdom; threatening, if I refused, to march against this city with a million of men."

"The illustrious general could make but one answer to so infamous a proposal," said Nicholas.

"And that was to offer a reward of ten thousand taels to the brave man who should lay the head of so black a dragon at my feet," said the general; adding, "Soon after came the news that Li was on his march, with a vast army, to chastise me for the insult, and I began to prepare to receive him; but, finding that the number of my troops was so small that the multitudinous army of the rebels would hew them to pieces in the first battle, rather than suffer such a dis-

grace, and permit so vile a criminal to remain unpunished, I dared to propose to make peace with the Tartar king conditionally, that he would help me to drive this rogue from the land. This proposition was indignantly resisted by the prince, when (may I be pardoned for so daring an act) I became but the more resolved and immediately sent a special envoy to the Tartar, who, in return, sent by his brother, the great Amavan, a promise to add to my little army one hundred thousand of his bravest troops. Scarcely, however, had a day elapsed after the departure of my envoy to the Tartar, than the royal Young-Li left the city in anger."

"Truly, general, the prince was wise, for although in war and council all men are mice by the side of the great Woo-san-Kwei, surely in this his wisdom must have failed him, for, O, general, is it reasonable to bring in tigers to chase away dogs?" said Nicholas, warmly.

To which Woo-san-Kwei made no reply, but terminated the audience to keep down his anger.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CRUEL DEATH OF THE AGED WOO.—A BATTLE.—BRAVERY OF THE BOYS.—CHOW TAKEN BY THE ENEMY.

With terrible anxiety, Nicholas awaited the return of the party sent in search of the princess, but when evening came and they brought not the slightest clue, his grief grew beyond all bounds, and he resolved to seek the general's permission to go himself in search, but, as on the following day, a deserter from the enemy brought news that the main body of the rebels was within a few miles of Lao-yang, he was compelled to remain with Woo-san-Kwei, at least till the enemy had been destroyed or beaten back from whence they came.

Then terrible preparations were made for a close fight, in the event of the enemy assaulting the town before the arrival of the Tartars; but when Li-Kong came in sight, with an army so vast that it covered the country for miles, the hearts of Woo-san-Kwei's troops grew faint, for should the Tartars deceive them, they were lost, for against such numbers it was impossible they could hold out many days. Still, the greatest coward grew courageous when he thought of the merciless cruelty of Li, knowing it would be a

far more easy death to fall upon the walls than into his hands, and so for days they held out bravely against the attacks which had now become incessant. Then, through the continued efforts, both by day and night, made by the two youths, to sustain the courage of the troops, the latter recovered their spirits, and so gallantly did the boys help in repelling the assailants, that they were praised by the general in front of the whole army.

Fourteen days had they defended the town, when the provisions became so scarce, that, again losing hope, the troops grew mutinous and threatened to throw down their arms, when, upon the fifteenth, upon a hill that arose far behind the rebel army, there shot up to the heavens a vast body of blue fire, upon which, forgetting their troubles, the soldiers became frantic with joy, offered thanks to Fo, and returned to their duties with renewed energy; and no wonder, for it was the signal that the Tartars were on their march to relieve them.

Li-Kong must also have understood the signal, for from the moment of its appearance one-half of his army began to manœuvre, so as to present a good front to the new enemy, while the other commenced a fierce assault upon the town. Seeing assistance at hand, Woo-san-Kwei ordered his troops to reserve their arrows and ammunition till their ally had so weakened the enemy's rear that he could judiciously leave the town, and attack them in front. When, however, the besieged slackened fire, the assaulting party retired, and a body of their cavalry, holding their great

shields before them to receive stray arrows, rode forward to within half a bow-shot from the walls, when they came to a dead halt.

"What mean the dogs? surely they escort an envoy from the rash rebel," said the general, commanding silence along the walls; and then ordering one of his officers to shout to the party, that they might remove their shields without fear.

This having been done, the men let fall their shields, when the sight that presented itself caused the brave general to reel, so that he would have fallen but for the support of Nicholas. As for Chow, he placed an arrow in his bow, and would have sent it flying at the chief of the party, had not an officer struck the arrow from its rest, saying, "How, wouldst thou disobey the general?" and brought to his senses, the boy stood stamping his feet, gnashing his teeth, and twitching the bow with suppressed rage. Well might the sight cause such consternation on the part of the general, for there upon horseback, heavily laden with chains, sat his father the venerable Woo, with his long gray hair flowing down his bared neck, accompanied by an executioner, who stood by his side, holding a naked sabre.

"What would the General Li-Kong with Woo-san-Kwei, that he thus humbles him?" said Woo-san-Kwei.

"Let the venerable Woo answer the question of his rebel son," said the chief of the party.

Then with a glance of fierce defiance at his guards, the old noble said, "It is well known, O my son, that

the heavens, earth, and fate cause strange vicissitudes of fortune; even so have they deposed the Emperor Wey-t-song, and placed in his royal seat the Emperor Li-Kong, who, if thou wilt make a virtue of necessity, acknowledge his dominion, and serve him as a faithful tributary, will confer upon thee the title and dignity of a king; but if thou refusest submission, the head of thy parent will be the penalty. Such are the words the aged Woo hath been commanded to deliver; it is now for his brave son to consider what he oweth to him who gave him life."

So great was the indignation of the troops of Woo-san-Kwei, that but for the danger of Woo, whom the rebels had placed in their front, they would have shot down the whole party. As for the general, he stood for some minutes bewildered; had it been his rank, fortune, or life, that was in danger, his filial love would have prevented an instant's hesitation; but was he not the son of a man whose whole life had been dedicated to the people? alas! this knowledge made his agony the greater; for the better the man, the greater reason his life should be saved at any cost. At any? No—not at the cost of his honor, and the safety of the people, whom this Li-Kong was decimating hourly.

With terrible patience the chief of the party awaited a reply. It was given. Woo-san-Kwei fell upon his knees. "Pardon, O my venerable and noble parent," said he aloud, "but it is not under heaven that thou couldst wish thy son to do this thing; if it be so, let this be the answer: He that is not faithful to

the people will never be faithful to his son; therefore, if you forget your duty and fidelity to the imperial family, and the people, by demanding that thy son should be guilty of so great a crime, no man will blame Woo-san-Kwei for forgetting his duty and obedience to such a father." Then, turning to the chief, the general added sternly, "Take back these words, thou dog: That the son of the venerable Woo will die the dog's death rather than acknowledge so great and cruel a thief as this Li-Kong."

"These are fragrant words, O my noble son; for hadst thou been guilty of so monstrous a crime, the names both of father and son would have sounded hateful in the ears of posterity: the father, that he had brought up a son so basely; and the son, that he could save so bad a parent," replied the venerable noble.

"Shall it go down to posterity that the noble Woo-san-Kwei was the assassin of his parent?" said the chief of the party.

"Thou hast thy answer, dog, and if thou art within bow-shot longer than the next five minutes thy miserable life shall be the forfeit," said the general; adding sorrowfully, "Farewell, O my venerable parent. May the great Tien pardon me, if I have not chosen virtuously."

"Thy choice, O noble son, will make happy the last moments of thy father," said the old noble; when, interrupting him, the rebel chief said, "Still thou shalt have another chance to save this old man's life, thou obstinate rebel; adding, "I will grant thee

another hour, and if within that time a fire is made upon your walls, I shall take it as the token of your submission; but if at the end of the hour such a signal has not been made, then shall a similar signal from the Emperor's camp proclaim thy parent to be on his journey to the yellow stream."

After this the party hastened back to their camp, leaving the agonized general standing in melancholy thoughtfulness, till just as the fifth minute expired his attention was called to a small party of horsemen, who, led by Nicholas and Chow, were at full gallop after the envoy. It was rashness, nay, madness, for they were rushing upon the very outposts of the enemy, and nothing less than a miracle could save the foolish youths; when, turning to an officer, he cried, "Haste thee with what horse you can collect to the rescue of those foolish boys."

The order was obeyed, and some two hundred horse galloped forward, and reached them in time to save Nicholas alone; as for Chow, having recognized in the chief of the party the mandarin who had slain his father, he had galloped greatly beyond his own party, when the mandarin, fearing for the safe custody of Woo, pressed forward with such haste, that, getting far ahead of his own party, Chow found himself a prisoner before he knew where he was. Enraged at his danger, Nicholas would have followed, but for the soldiers sent by Woo-san-Kwei, who, coming up to him, caught hold of the rein of his horse, and in the name of the general commanded him to return to the city. By the time, however, he

returned to the town, Woo-san-Kwei had determined to make a dash at the rebels with a faint hope of saving his father,—a hope that was not unreasonable, especially as the advanced guards of the Tartars were now seen to attack Li-Kong from the opposite side. The little army was ready; the general was at their head; but before they had marched far, a bright flame shot up from the camp of Li-Kong. The head of Woo-san-Kwei fell upon the neck of his horse; he sobbed aloud, "The assassin has taken thy life, my noble parent;" but arousing himself, he added, "For this one deed, O thou villain, thou shalt be hunted from the land;" and so great were the numbers of the Tartars, and the bravery of Woo-san-Kwei and his little army, that before midnight Li-Kong had been driven from his position with the loss of at least one-half of his great power.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE REBELS BEATEN.—ARTFULNESS OF THE TARTAR KING.—CHAGRIN AND DISAPPOINTMENT OF NICHOLAS.

At daybreak the battle was resumed; and with such terrible bravery did the troops of Woo-san-Kwei and his ally the Tartar king fight, that before noon the rebels fled in all directions; the main body, under Li himself, retreating into the province of Petche-Lee, where for many weeks they were followed by the Tartars; and although the latter beat Li in every engagement, and slew vast numbers of his troops, he managed so cleverly that he reached Pekin; which city being well fortified and manned by his adherents, he held out till the Tartars were reinforced by many thousands of their brethren, who, now that the ancient barrier of Leao-tong had been broken, flooded the empire like a mighty torrent. Then Li, brave and able as he really was, saw the necessity of retreating from the capital. To do this with profit to himself, the artful rogue placed the whole of his troops upon and before the northern walls; by this means he kept the soldiers employed and the enemy at bay at least eight days and nights, during which time his more immediate friends and faithful followers were engaged in carrying from the imperial

palace the vast treasures of jewels, gold, and silver, collected by the Ming Emperors during the preceding two hundred and eighty years, with which they escaped to Si-gnan, in the province of Chen-si. Then, when the Tartar army entered the capital, although terribly chagrined at the loss of so much treasure, they did but follow Li-Kong a short distance, when they gave up the pursuit and returned to Pekin, greatly to the vexation of Woo-san-Kwei, who, as you will see, soon found that his new friends were as bad as his old enemies.

No sooner was Li-Kong expelled, than Woo-san-Kwei proclaimed the Prince Yong-Li Emperor, and offered to pay the Tartar king an immense sum for the use of his army, at the same time respectfully begging he would withdraw his troops from the empire, as it was contrary to the sacred books that so many foreigners should remain in the sacred capital; to which polite request the Tartar made an equally polite reply: "We do not," said he, think it fit to leave yet, for there are many unsubdued thieves who may cause as much trouble as this Li-Kong; moreover, this arch-rebel is himself established in his province, and would doubtless return if he found that we, whom alone he fears, had quitted China; therefore, O noble Woo-san-Kwei, we are resolved to follow up our victory, and exterminate every rogue in the land, so that you may deliver the empire to Yong-Li in full peace and prosperity; as for the payment for our services, we are not poor, and can wait till the kingdom be settled. In the mean time, however,

that which we chiefly desire is, that the great Woo-san-Kwei shall recruit his army from our own, and proceed to Chen-si to destroy the dog Li, while we, with our brave Tartars, will endeavor to sweep from the southern provinces the rogues and thieves who are now settled therein."

Deeply chagrined that he had replaced dogs with tigers, Woo-san-Kwei could do nothing but obey—for in reality it was a command; and so he proceeded into Chen-si, accompanied by Nicholas, where, after a campaign of many months, he succeeded in destroying the power and army of Li-Kong; as for the rogue himself, as his body was not found, it was supposed that he had been killed, while endeavoring to escape in the disguise of a private soldier.

Throughout the campaign in Chen-si, Nicholas had fought with terrible energy, for he had hoped that when they took possession of Li-Kong's palace, he should obtain at least some clue to the fate of the princess and Chow, both of whom, if alive, he believed to be in the power of the rebels. As, however, notwithstanding the highest rewards and the most vigorous search, he failed in gaining the slightest clue, he felt greatly pleased when they returned to Pekin, where he was not without hope that the princess might be concealed, and if so, she was safe; for doubtlessly, by the time they reached the city, their Tartar allies would, according to their promise, have proclaimed her brother, the Prince Yong-Li, Emperor.

So great and popular had been the successes of

Woo-san-Kwei in Chen-si, that as he rode toward Pekin the people came out, and falling upon their knees, almost worshiped him as the restorer of peace and order. About midway between Chen-si and Pekin, they were met by the great officers of the Tartar king, who brought with them a vast body of troops, in order to augment the state of the general's triumphal entrance into the capital Now this was very gratifying to Nicholas, for seeing the Tartars pay so much respect to the great Ming general, he doubted less than ever that, like faithful friends, if they had not already done so, they would speedily restore Yong-Li to his throne—a gratification which was considerably heightened, when, at the gates of the city, they were met by a procession of great officers, both Tartars and Chinese, who, in the name of the Emperor, greeted Woo-san-Kwei with the title of King of Chen-si; so with difficulty the procession passed through the masses of people, whose hoarse voices clamored, "Long life, ten thousand years, to the Emperor."

"This, then," thought Nicholas, "is indeed a fortunate day; for not only have these brave Tartars restored the Prince Yong-Li to his right, but the amiable prince commences his reign by an act of gratitude; for, forgetting his quarrel with Woo-san-Kwei, he rewards his great services with the kingdom of Chen-si." Thus they rode onward till they came to the palace, where the Emperor was waiting to do honor to the great general.

Then, as Nicholas passed through the courts of

the palace, he stared with surprise, not unmixed with indignation, at the disproportion of the numbers of Chinese to those of the Tartars. Yet again, surely it was but gratitude on the part of the young Emperor to reward those who had restored him to the throne of his ancestors; still a strange fear crept over him, and he said, almost in a whisper, "Truly, O illustrious prince, these barbarians have taken possession of the empire."

"It is as wise, O youth, to make a virtue of necessity, as it is childish to resist the decrees of fate," said the general; and then a pang of disappointment shot through the youth's heart; his illusion vanished; moreover, he would have given his life to have avoided the scene before him. They had entered the great hall of audience; there, upon the golden dragon throne, surrounded by the warrior princes and chiefs of Mantchouria, sat the Emperor. The Emperor, indeed! not Yong-Li, but a Tartar child of six years of age. Heartsick, enraged, he would have spoken. The general perceiving his misery, clutched his arm. Nicholas checked his impatience, but nevertheless muttered, "'Surely the heavens will fall, for the great Woo-san-Kwei has proved a traitor."

CHAPTER XL.

THE GREAT BOY EMPEROR.—NICHOLAS MEETS WITH A FEARFUL SURPRISE.

Once having entered the rich empire of China, the Tartar king determined to remain, and thus artfully sent Woo-san-Kwei, the only man he feared, to chastise the rebels in Chen-si, so that he could the better introduce more and more of the warrior tribes beneath his rule: moreover, he was so cruel to those who resisted his army, and so generous and kind to those who submitted freely, that the people, glad to get a sovereign who had power enough to crush the rapacious nobles, unanimously hailed him Emperor; before, however, he could be formally installed, he became seized with a mortal illness, so, calling his brother Amavan, he created him regent during the minority of his son Chun-ti, a child six years of age.

Fortunately for the young Emperor, Amavan, unlike most Asiatic uncles, proved faithful to his nephew, and, more fortunately still, Amavan happened to be a great as well as a brave man, who conquered his enemies as much by his intellect as his sword. Taking care, therefore, to have an overwhelming number of troops in Pekin, he first sought to establish the government by distributing the great

offices of the empire equally among his Tartars and the Chinese mandarins. Then to Woo-san-Kwei he had represented by his ambassadors the folly of endeavoring to oppose the great power of the new Emperor, and, moreover, the cruelty of bringing upon the people the horrors of a civil war; while, if he would aid in the firm settlement of the new dynasty, he should not only be created King of Chen-si, but that, as the laws of the Chinese were the best in the world, the Tartars should conform to them in every respect. To all of which Woo-san-Kwei, being so entirely checkmated, could but submit, retaining a hope that the time and opportunity might come when he should be powerful enough to drive these Tartars from the land—a task which, when too late, he found to be rather more difficult than bringing them in.

Having thus, as he thought, gained over the Ming general to his cause, and wishing to give the Chinese a proof that the young Emperor wished to conciliate them, Amavan resolved that the greatest of their countrymen should be received on his entry into Pekin with royal honors; and more, that the same day should be the one chosen for his imperial nephew's first grand levee.

I will now return to Nicholas, who, with hardly suppressed indignation, was compelled to witness the following scene.

Having commanded the great lords, who were prostrate at the foot of his throne, to rise, the child Emperor Chun-ti addressed them in a speech that not only astonished the whole court, but remains to

the present day one of the marvels in the history of China.

"It is your strength and power more than my felicity, my dear and generous uncle, and you, the rest of my noble commanders, which supports my weakness, and makes me so undauntedly ascend this imperial throne. My present assurance, and this chair's stability, is, I hope, as happy a sign of my future prosperity as its tottering proved unfortunate to the thief Li-Kong. You see my first step to the empire, but I know your valor to be such that I look not only upon the kingdom of China as my own, but conceive the empire of the world not only by me possessed, but also established. The rewards due to such incomparable virtues shall be no other than the riches of the empire and royal dignities."

At this extraordinary speech from the lips of so young a child, and which, notwithstanding the silence of solemn historians on the subjects, I believe must have been taught Master Chun-ti by his uncle, the artful Amavan, the nobles fell upon their faces, as thankfully as a flock of famished wolves at the ight of a good meal after a run of a great many undreds of miles

After which the Emperor added, "And that it may be known throughout the empire that we can reward merit, whether it be found in our Chinese subjects or our own black-haired race, we bestow upon the rebel-subduing Prince Woo-san-Kwei, the title of Pacifier of the Western World, and the dignity and rank of King of Chen-si; may his appoint

ment prove fortunate to the people." Whereupon, to the disgust of Nicholas, the Ming general knelt before the Emperor, and holding his hands above his head, received the golden box, in which were placed the symbols of his office.

After this Nicholas was pained not only to witness the bestowal of high offices upon the Tartar chieftains, but, for worse, the acceptation of dignities by Chinese mandarins, who had been profuse in their professions of loyalty to the Ming family. Then, as the Emperor was about to move his sleeves as a signal of the close of the audience, one of the nobles announced the arrival of some great personage, whose name his ears failed to catch, whereupon the regent Amavan said, "This man, O my prince, is the greatest of your majesty's conquests," and in another minute a personage of majestic height and figure, attired and attended with all the magnificence of a king, entered the hall and fell at the foot of the throne, and as he did so Amavan proclaimed his name and titles, when Nicholas gave a cry of astonishment, and would have rushed forward, but for Woo-san-Kwei, who, by whispering in his ear, caused him to become as pale and almost as silent as marble. His surprise and indignation was not wonderful, for the great man who knelt at the feet of the Tartar chief was no less a personage than his own father, Chin-Chi-Loong.

CHAPTER XLI.

NICHOLAS HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH HIS FATHER, AND LEAVES PEKIN FOR EVER.

Not daring to believe, yet trembling for fear his father should be the traitor to the Mings that his submission to Chun-ti had proclaimed him, Nicholas followed the procession that conducted Chin-Chi-Loong to the palace appointed for his residence in Pekin; nor could he help remarking the absence of Chinese faces among the soldiers and attendants who followed him. Again, when he entered the palace, the courtyards, and the passages, nought could he see but Tartars. "Surely," he thought, "my beloved father must be a prisoner of state;" and, much vexed at his unfilial misgivings of his parent's loyalty, he sent to the chief a message by one of the attendants, that "the bearer of his letter from the south to the north" craved an immediate audience of the King Pacifier of the South; when, as the chief knew that it could be no other than Nicholas, in another minute the father and son had met again, after their long absence from each other.

"Is it possible that my father can have become so terrified by the tempestuous fortunes of the imperial Ming, that he should seek the sunshine of the barba-

rian's court?" said Nicholas, sadly, when the first greeting was past.

"This is, indeed, the most unfortunate day in the life of Chin-Chi-Loong, if his son can believe him willingly guilty of so great a crime," said the chief.

"What words are these, my noble parent? for if thou art not a receiver of stolen things, how camest thou by this kingdom of Fokien? for surely it was not given to thee by the Emperor Yong-Li," replied Nicholas.

"Is my son blind, that he cannot see that his parent is a prisoner to these Tartar dogs?"

"A prisoner, my father! Do the Tartars confer kingdoms upon their prisoners?" said Nicholas.

"Even as thou wilt hear," replied the chief; adding, "The commission sent by the Emperor Wey-tsong created his servant lord of the four seas. Once in possession of that office I sought to sweep the rebels and thieves from the sea-coast provinces, but by the time I had effected this great end, the news came that the rebel Li-Kong had slain the Emperor and usurped the throne; then I determined to hold possession of the seas, towns, and cities for the Prince Yong-Li, and so for many months kept the miserable Tartars who had invaded those provinces at bay; and even when the barbarians poured into the empire like locusts, I still kept possession of the sea-coast towns and cities. Then, afraid of my power, the Tartar king and his brother Amavan sent a great embassy, assuring me they were allies of the great Woosan-Kwei, who, to quell the rebellion and hunt

the robbers from the face of the land, had prayed their assistance; moreover, they swore that when they had purged the empire of all such rogues, they would place it in the hands of the Prince Yong-Li and leave the land."

"Surely my father was too wise to believe the artful thieves," said Nicholas.

"Not so, my son, for the embassy was supported by a letter in the characters of Woo-san-Kwei, informing me of the cruel murder of his parent, earnestly beseeching my aid in exterminating the rebels, and also assuring me of the good faith of the Tartar rats. Not doubting so great and wise a general, and moreover that the people might believe my authority lawful, I accepted from the Tartar king the title of Pacificator of the South, and the kingdom of Fokien. When, however, I had made amity with him, he poured fresh hordes into the cities, so that speedily I had little power upon land, and determined upon the first opportunity to again seek my fleet. It was then that I became betrayed into their hands, for the Prince Amavan, who commanded in the south, suddenly gave out that he was proceeding to Pekin, to aid in the installation of the new Emperor, and prayed that previous to his departure I would take part in a great hunting expedition. Knowing this to be the darling pastime of these barbarians, I complied. When, however, we had reached a great distance from the coast, I saw a large body of troops come from behind a neighboring hill, and immediately, fearing treachery, I resolved to escape, but the mild manner

of Amavan persuaded me that my fears were idle; so when too late I found myself in the midst of the main body of his army; with the greatest politeness, he informed me his brother the king was dead, and that the Emperor was his nephew Chun ti. At the news, I could have plunged my dagger into the rogue; but knowing that force would be useless among such a formidable army, I dissembled my rage, and pretended to rejoice at the chance of prosperity the people would have beneath such an Emperor."

"Indeed it were better to die than dissemble, my father," said Nicholas, with flashing eyes.

"Listen, my son. Well, taking advantage of my apparent joy, this Amavan told me he was commanded by the Emperor to invite me to his court, where I should formally receive my title and kingdom from the imperial hands. Thus had I the choice of entering Pekin as a captive or a king."

"The former would have been more worthy of the great sea chief, whose ambition hath ruined him," said Nicholas.

"Is it possible that thou canst dare——"

"Pardon, O my father, but thy son will dare any thing and every thing till he can rescue his parent, country, and Emperor from the hands of these barbarians, and until he has done this he will rest neither by night nor day."

"Do this, and my error may yet be retrieved."

"Thy son shall be worthy of his parent," replied Nicholas; adding, "But cannot my father cast aside

this mock dignity, and at once escape from this rebellious city?"

"It is not possible; it would not be wise; it would be treasonous to the General Woo-san-Kwei."

"Then the noble Woo-san-Kwei is not a traitor to the Emperor Yong-Li," said Nicholas, eagerly.

"Hist!" replied the chief by way of caution; then adding, "He but waits the opportunity to rise and exterminate the Tartars."

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Nicholas; adding, "Yet surely these double ways are neither honest nor successful." Then, taking farewell of his parent, he left the palace, and making his way to a portion of the city unfrequented by the Tartars, exchanged his rich clothes for the attire of a small merchant, went to the river, and after some hard bargaining, took a passage on board a trading junk, and left Pekin for ever.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE RIVAL SEA CHIEFS.—RE-APPEARANCE OF AN OLD FRIEND.—A COMICAL BATTLE WITH THE TARTARS.

Once masters of Pekin, which being so near their native wilds, enabled them to introduce hordes of their fellow-countrymen, the Tartars conquered prov ince by province, till they obtained possession of the whole empire. The most difficult, however, to subdue, were the southern districts, which edged the sea, and chiefly for this reason: that not long after they succeeded in entrapping Chin-Chi-Loong, to their surprise, there appeared another and a greater sea chief, whose fleet was so large, and his successes so great in destroying the Tartar settlements upon the coasts, and even the great towns up the Yang-tse-Kiang, that the greater part of the Chinese, who had any spirit or patriotism remaining, flocked to his standard, and swelled his fleet and army to such a size, that the Tartar government, trembling with fear for the capital itself, offered immense rewards for his head; and finding that of no use, offered to give him the command of the seas, and even a kingdom, if he would acknowledge their rule; but all this was of no use: the terrible patriot Tching-Tching-Kong, (or Koshinga, as the Portuguese did, and I shall for the

future, name him,) would listen to no other terms but their departure from the country, to which, but for the sudden appearance on the coast of another formidable sea-chief, named Yuen, they would in all probability have been compelled to yield.

Now the difference between these two chiefs was, that while Koshinga protected the Chinese against the invaders, the chief Yuen was a mere pirate, and, if booty were to be gained, destroyed both peoples alike. Moreover, the latter seemed to have a great hatred for Koshinga; for, although he dared not meet him in fair fight, if by chance he ever fell in with a solitary ship of his fleet, he would wantonly sink it with all its crew; and so terrible had the name of this Yuen become, that the people upon the coast named him the Black Sea-dragon. Neither was it possible to make out the object of this pirate. It could not have been the desire of mere wealth, for the Tartar government, thinking him a very desirable antagonist to Koshinga, offered him wealth, and the same rank they had offered to his rival, provided he succeeded in destroying the latter; but still, although Yuen hated the patriot sea chief, his dislike to the Tartars was no less, for, like Koshinga, he destroyed their houses and massacred their people at every opportunity. So at length, giving up all hope of conquering either of his amphibious enemies, Chun-ti issued an order that all the houses, cities, towns, and villages, within ten miles of the sea, should be destroyed, chiefly, I believe, to prevent the people from supplying them with provisions.

Well, one day, shortly after this order had been received, and the inhabitants of a small town on the coast of Fokien were in high bustle packing up their goods and chattels ready for departure, some by means of carts, others, and the greater part, by junks and barges, a large merchant junk stood in from the sea, entered the narrow creek into which the river emptied itself, anchored, and would have remained unnoticed by the soldiers, who were inspecting the carrying out of the Emperor's orders, but for the appearance of a young man, who, stepping on shore, was immediately seized by the order of the officer. "Who is the vile slave, that he dares disobey the commands of the great Emperor?" said the latter.

"Surely thy servant, who has but just entered the town, can be guilty of no crime?"

"Are the words of the Emperor dirt, that they should have escaped the ears of so small a dog?" said the officer.

"Truly these holy words have not fallen into the ears of thy mean servant, O magnificent commander," returned the other.

"Then let the dog's ears be opened, and he shall hear," said the officer, directing a soldier to proclaim the royal command, which was to the effect that the long hair of every Chinese should be shaven from his head, and the growth of a Tartar tail encouraged, in order that there should be no difference between the two races.

When the stranger, however, heard the order, his eyes flashed, and his lips quivered with rage, at the

great badge of slavery the Tartars were thrusting upon his countrymen; and he placed his hand beneath his robe, as if clutching the hilt of a sword; but then, looking at the Tartar troops, who had by this time surrounded him, and perceiving the folly of resistance, he said, "Truly the ears of thy servant have not heard this order."

"Let the dog obey, or he shall be strangled," was the only reply.

Then, with a look half tragic, half comic, and, taking his long flowing locks in his hand, he said, "Surely the magnificent commander will give his servant a few hours to prepare his head for so serious a farewell?"

The next minute, however, one of the barbers who accompanied the troops for the purpose of performing the first operation upon the conquered people, made his appearance, and, setting down his apparatus, began to prepare his scissors and large knife, when, like a half-secured animal whose dim instinct had just been aroused to the fact of the coming slaughter, the stranger struck out with both fists, sending barber and officer rolling one over the other, and darted off, followed by at least a dozen arrows from the bows of the soldiers, who, however had been too much surprised to aim properly.

Now, weak and effeminate as the Chinese had shown themselves in allowing the empire to become so easily conquered by the Tartars, this insult was always deeply felt even by those who had been compelled to submit, so in a few minutes they gathered

about the Tartars in great numbers, and being inspired by the stranger's pluck, from hard words came to such hard blows, that the bully Tartars were very glad to beat a retreat, only promising to themselves a great revenge hereafter.

As for the stranger, he ran with such speed and blind terror, at the notion of losing his beautiful hair, that he tumbled headlong over an old sow into a litter of pigs, which were among the goods about to be taken away; and, comical as was this scene, it might have been serious, for the animal, seeing her family attacked by so formidable an enemy, would have made it a personal matter, but for a mob of people who came to the rescue of the stranger, at whose spirit in resisting the hateful order they were so delighted, that they lifted him upon their shoulders; when the youth, in his excitement, mistaking them for Tartars, put both his hands to his locks, exclaiming, "You dogs, I will rather lose my head than prove such a coward."

"A patriot! a hero! down with the Tartar thieves!" said the mob.

When the stranger, recovering from his fright, said, "Pardon, O my brothers, for believing you to be such dogs."

Then the crowd gave more cheers, and asked where he would be taken to.

"Know any of you the residence of the colao Ki?" was the reply.

"To the house of the good Ki," exclaimed the mob, and in a few minutes more they had deposited him

at the gates of a great house not far distant from the sea.

"What rogue is this who dares disturb the quiet of the noble Ki?" said the servant who opened the gate.

"Le' me pass, thou mean fellow, said the apparently mad-headed stranger, rushing through halls and courts till he reached the door of the women's apartments, which, to the horror of the servant, who now called for assistance, he burst open, and, seeing two ladies, fell at the feet of one of them, sobbing aloud, "Then my information is true, and I have found thee again, my venerable and beloved parent." Need I tell you that the stranger was no other than Chow?

"The gods punish me with a false vision, my eyeballs must be old, or it is indeed my beloved son Chow," said the lady, throwing her arms around her son's neck.

"The faithful friend of the noble Nicholas! Surely this is not possible," said the princess, hysterically, so forgetting her rank in her delighted surprise, that she embraced him as a brother, not a little, I assure you, to the wonder and horror of the servants, and the colao himself, who had hastened to the apartment to secure the daring robber, as the frightened servant had reported, and which Ki believed Chow to be, feeling certain that none but a thief would be guilty of so profane an act as entering the sacred apartments of the ladies.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CHOW DISCOVERS HIS MOTHER AND THE PRINCESS.—RESCUES THEM FROM THE TARTARS AND RELATES HIS ADVENTURES.

WHEN the surprise had a little subsided upon both sides, Chow looked around, listened anxiously for a moment, and then said, "This is a fortunate day; the surprise, the joy is great, but, alas! it will be short-lived, for the barbarians can neither forget nor forgive," and he related his adventure with the soldiers; when, taking him by the hand, the princess said, "Fear not, friend of my brother; the barbarians dare not enter the house of Ki; for the usurper, barbarian as he is, has bestowed honor upon the noble colao for his services to his late Emperor, and as a consolation for his misfortunes; and in the house of one upon whom Chun-ti has bestowed the honored title of 'Faithful to his Prince,' no person dares enter unasked."

"Thy servant feared less for himself than for his beloved mother and the illustrious princess, whom he is commanded by the noble Nicholas to rescue from the degenerate soil of China, till it again owns its native princess," said Chow; adding, "From the hour that the vile guide betrayed the illustrious prin-

cess into the hands of the rogues, the noble Nicholas has left no stone unturned to discover thy fate." Then, repeating the history of their adventures to the time of his being taken prisoner by Li-Kong, he added, "So enraged was the villain mandarin, that, instead of killing me on the spot, he reserved me for a cruel death upon our reaching Pekin; then, however, being driven from the capital, he took me with him to Chen-si, where I was kept loaded with chains in a damp hole for many months, till indeed the great rebel was himself driven out of Chen-si, when, so ill that I could not walk, I was taken from the prison and conveyed to the house of the physician, who had been ordered to take charge of the sick and wounded, and unfortunately I remained senseless so long, that when I recovered, I discovered that not only had the great Woo-san-Kwei been the general who had punished Li, but that my beloved master had been with him. Bitterly regretting the misfortune that had caused me to miss him so narrowly, I resolved on seeking him in the capital; and so without money or food, but what I could beg on the road, I traveled, being compelled to rest many days upon my journey.

"At length, however, I reached Pekin, when, to my great rage, not only did I find that the Tartar prince had seized the throne, but that my noble master had left the city in horror at the great treason of his illustrious parent Chin-Chi-Loong. Then, weary of a world which contained so much vileness and misfortune, I should have myself sought the yellow stream, had it not occurred to me, that it would be

[illegible] Tartars were [illegible] the Chinese [illegible] and the Tartar soldiers were [illegible] a report that the terrible Koshinga, whose name just about that time had become famous, would land. Well, the report proved true, for the sea-chief appeared with a great fleet, and drove the Tartars inland; when, feeling weary of my servitude, and longing to fight against the usurping barbarians, I offered my services to one of the commanders, and no sooner had I put in force that virtuous resolution, than my fortunes began to mend, for in one of the ships I found the noble Nicholas.

"Well, I will only tell the illustrious princess how that I kept by the side of the noble Nicholas in all battles that have been fought by the great Kos'inga; but in the midst of our adventures and successes,

both the noble Nicholas and his servant were unhappy, for they pined to learn the fate of the daughter of the Mings, whom the heavens had once entrusted to their care. At every town upon the coast, from every man who joined the fleet, did we endeavor to trace some clue, not omitting to offer great rewards; it was all, however, useless, till one day a Tartar prisoner was taken and brought to our ship, and as he had with him a copy of the *Pekin Gazette*, which contains the officers of the empire and the decrees of the Emperor, the noble Nicholas eagerly read it to find out the movements of the barbarians, when, much to his surprise, he saw that the noble Ki had been restored to his rank and fortunes, and, moreover, was permitted to reside unmolested at his native palace in Fokien. 'Thus, then, O Chow, we have a fortunate day; here is a clue to the princess—for should she have escaped the villain rebels, this old and faithful servant of her royal father will surely know,' said the noble Nicholas."

"Truly the great Father of heaven hath directed, this even," said the princess.

"Then, O my princess, the heart of thy servant leaped for joy; for he knew that the clue to the illustrious daughter of the Mings would lead to the discovery of his beloved mother, so upon his knees he begged his noble master to let him search the coast of Fokien, a request he would have granted, had not the whole fleet been ordered by the chief Koshinga to attack and drive the barbarian Hollanders from the great island of Formosa on that day. Then for

nearly four moons was the fleet before the castle of Zealand, which protects the island; and so well did the barbarians fight, that we had no other hope but to starve them out; at length, however, they were joined by the numerous ships of the traitorous black dragon Yuen, and for the first time Koshinga was near being defeated, till at length destiny led him to fill seven of his ships with oil and inflammable materials, when, taking advantage of the first north-easterly wind, he set them on fire, and sent them among the ships of Yuen, the greater part of which being destroyed, the crews with the black dragon sought the shores in their boats. Thus having got rid of the fleet, the great Koshinga landed his troops, and after a great battle killed the greater portion of the pirates, made the remainder prisoners, and took possession of the country.

"Truly this Koshinga is a great war dragon," said the princess.

"And noble as he is brave; for although he punished the traitor pirates with death, as enemies to their true Emperor, he permitted the miserable Hollanders, who, being barbarians, could know no better, to pile up their household goods in one of their ships and depart."

"Thou hast not said aught of the noble Nicholas during this terrible fight," said the princess.

"Truly, O illustrious lady, he fought like the brave war tiger that he is, and performed the greatest act of the fight; for with his own hands he slew the villain Yuen."

"Then great was his destiny, for he has rendered the whole empire grateful," exclaimed Ki.

"They owe the noble Nicholas more gratitude than the rebel Li-Kong, of whose place of refuge, or fate, none have been able to imagine, since the taking of Chen-si by the great Woo-san-Kwei."

"God is indeed great; thus may treason be for ever punished," said the princess.

"But greater to thy servant was the capturing of the villain mandarin, who killed his venerable parent. I had struck the rogue down with my sword, and rejoicing that I had at last the opportunity of destroying so great a villain, was about to kill him, when he saved his life by uttering a few words."

"Is it under heaven that thou couldst save the life of the slayer of thy parent?" exclaimed Chow's mother.

"Truly, my noble mother, for those words were 'Thy mother and the princess.' Like magic they kept my sword suspended midway, and I said, 'What words are these, thou dog?' And the mean rogue said, 'If the noble captain will save the life of his slave, he shall be restored to his parent.' Need a son tell his mother that he promised when the rascal said, 'That it had been known for a long time to him that the princess was living in disguise in the house of the retired colao in Fokien, and that had Li-Kong been successful in defeating Koshinga, it was the rogue's intention to sail for the coast and seize the illustrious lady?"

"Truly Heaven is merciful in having destroyed such a villain," said the princess.

"Then," added Chow, "delighted with the discovery, my enmity to the rogue became lost in my anxiety to again see my parent; so I besought of the noble Nicholas to send me in search of those lost pearls of our existence, which he did with these words: 'Tell the illustrious princess that the Tartar rogues will seize her if she does not seek the protection of Koshinga, the friend of China and the Mings, of whose favor her adopted brother Nicholas will assure her.' Thus commissioned, I obtained one of the smallest junks of the fleet, had it repainted and disguised to resemble a trading vessel, set sail from the island, and landed this morning, when I so nearly fell into the hands of the rats of Tartars. Such is the history of thy servant, and such his mission. It is for the great wisdom of the princess alone, to consider whether the daughter of the Mings may long remain in safety and undiscovered beneath the dominion of the butchers of her race."

"Heaven is beneficent and thy words wise, O Chow," said the princess.

"Truly, daughter of my beloved master, thy safety would have been endangered had we been permitted to remain here, for since the villain mandarin knew thy secret, it is but reasonable to believe that it may be in the possession of another who may part with it for a high price to the Emperor Chun-ti. But since this cruel order has arrived, to destroy all the houses for ten miles inland, the princess can find no safer asylum than the country of the great patriot Koshinga," said the colao.

Never could there have been a more fortunate time for them to leave the town; for, as all the inhabitants were hastening to obey the order of the Emperor, and were busy with their own affairs, they could escape the watchful eyes of the Tartars. So that very day they set about making preparations for their departure, and before twenty-four hours had passed, the whole party were on board Chow's ship and moving down the stream; indeed, not a moment before it was necessary, for scarcely had they got under weigh when a boat put off from the shore, filled with Tartar soldiers, the chief of whom commanded them to stop.

"What would the Tartar dogs?" said Chow, standing upon the poop of the vessel. The reply, however, was an arrow, which but narrowly missed the breast of the brave fellow; who, however, taking no notice of the missile, said, very coolly, as the soldiers reached the side of the ship and demanded to be admitted on board, "What would the Tartar dogs on board a quiet trading vessel?"

"The daughter of the miserable Ming," was the reply.

"Then only two at a time, my brother," replied Chow, acquiescing in their request. And without waiting for further permission, the two soldiers climbed up the side and stood on the deck, only, however, to find themselves tightly clasped by armed men, who had been lying down in readiness for them. At the same time Chow, assisted by some of his crew, threw a heavy bar over the ship's side into the

boat below, which falling across the bows and sinking her, sent the soldiers into the water struggling for their lives.

"Oh, oh!" said Chow to the two prisoners, "you are the affectionate rogues who wanted a lock of my hair."

"Surely the magnanimous hero would not murder two poor men who were doing their duty," was the reply.

"Truly it is said that fortune comes to every dog in its turn, and I am the bow-wow now," said Chow to the Tartars, as he tied together the ends of the long head-tails, of which they were so proud that they wished all China to imitate them, and consequently now roared for fear of losing them.

"Get you gone, you dogs!" said Chow; and the next moment the men were toppled over into the river, plunging, kicking, and at every plunge giving such reciprocal pulls at each other's tails that they became as belligerent as two cats in a similar predicament, and the more so, that the people upon the banks stood laughing heartily at their ridiculous gyrations.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A SEA VOYAGE—THE COLAO RELATES THE ADVENTURES OF THE PRINCESS.

ONCE on board, they were safe, for although the junk had been painted to resemble a trading ship, she was equipped with arms of every kind, and, moreover, with men, who had been hidden below; and it was fortunate that she was so well prepared, for when a Tartar junk put off after them, the crew of the latter no sooner perceived the deck crowded with armed men, and a flag hoisted at the mast-head, displaying the terrible name of Koshinga, than they relinquished the chase.

Once out at sea, the vessel was as quiet and happy as a holiday junk, and Chow sought permission to enter the state cabin of the princess.

"Truly, my brave Chow, we have had a narrow escape from these barbarians," said the princess; adding, "The words of the noble Ki were wise, the secret must have been known, and sold to the usurper."

"Truly thy servant would willingly sacrifice his mean life, could he see the great Yong-Li ascend the throne of his magnificent ancestors," exclaimed Chow; but, to his surprise, the beautiful eyes of the princess became suffused with tears.

"It is not under heaven, O princess, that thy slave can have given thee pain?" said Chow.

"Surely this is weak, for no tears should be found in the eyes of the daughter of the Mings, but those caused by the suffering of the people," said the princess; adding, "Alas! my poor brother, with him has departed the last hope of his race."

"What are these sad words, O my princess? Is it possible that the Emperor Yong-Li can have left the earth?"

Then, with an effort to subdue her sorrow, she said, "Even so, my brave Chow;" but, her grief overcoming her resolution, she could utter no more, and Chow respectfully left the cabin, followed by the colao, who thus related the adventures of the princess, and his mother, from the time of their abduction by the strange soldiers:—

"When, O brave Chow, the robbers found they had obtained the great prize they had so long been in search of, they hastened with all speed to the sea-coast, where they hoped to find a ship that would take them to the coast of Pe-tche-Lee, where the army of Li was reported to be encamped; when, however, they reached the port, they heard that the Prince Yong Li had quarrelled with Woo-san-Kwei, and having got together a great army, had marched to the city of Chao-Hing, which, after a few days, he had retaken from the Tartars, and caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor. Then, when the cunning thieves heard this news, and also that Yong-Li was reconquering the country all around, they bethought themselves that Yong-Li would give them a much higher price for a sister that he loved so dearly, than

would Li-Kong for a princess whom he only hoped to make his wife; so, making a virtue of a necessity, the rogues threw themselves at the feet of the royal lady, implored pardon for their roughness, and making a merit of their great crime, declared they were the faithful servants of her house, and intended to take her to her royal brother's court. Too glad to hear such news, she readily bestowed upon them a pardon; and, moreover, promised them great rewards if they would only conduct her in safety to her brother's presence.

"After some months' tedious and difficult traveling, they arrived at Chao-Hing, where they found that the report was truthful, and that the prince had really made a very great stride toward his throne. Well, the rogues were rewarded, and the princess delighted at being not only restored to her brother, but to the good and great Candida Hiu, who had escaped to Chao-Hing some time previously, with myself, the ancient servant of the imperial Mings; but, alas! fortune is capricious. A great army of barbarians so encompassed the city, that we were unable to procure food; still we held out, and the soldiers fought bravely, with the hope of being soon relieved. Then some foul demon put it into the head of the Tartar general, that the place might be taken without fighting. So, seeing that the waters of the river were at a greater height than had ever before been known, he first made a breach in the walls, and then caused his army to cut away the dikes and embankments, so that the waters rushed in such terrible force that the

houses were beaten down, and the city made one vast pool, in which three millions of people were drowned, the Lady Candida among them. Fortunately, however, the Emperor, the princess, and their servant, escaped the flood, and, after many trials and difficulties, reached the court of the King of Pegu, who, seeing the heir to so great a throne in such misfortune, readily offered him one of his palaces for his residence; and there we remained happily for some time, and might have continued till more fortunate days, but that its coming to the ears of the Tartars, that the Prince Yong-Li was under the protection of the King of Pegu, the latter, for fear of being dethroned by his terrible neighbor, was compelled to give the prince into the hands of the Tartar, who, taking him to Pekin, there had him destroyed in a cruel and ignominious manner. Fortunately, however, the Tartar did not know that the imperial La-Loo, was with her brother, and so, aided by the King of Pegu, I traveled into my own province of Fokien, taking the princess as my daughter, and thy mother as her attendant; and no plan could be so safe, for the Tartar barbarian had proclaimed that all those Chinese nobles who had suffered by the tyranny of Wey-tsong, or Li-Kong, should be reinstalled in their former rank and possessions, conferring upon me alone, for my long and faithful services to my late master, the high and honorable title of 'Faithful to the Emperor.'"

"Truly this is a sad and marvelous history," said Chow, taking a respectful leave of the venerable noble, and proceeding to the duties of the ship.

CHAPTER XLV.

THEY REACH THE PALACE OF THE SEA CHIEF KOSHINGA.

Oh! how the heart of the princess bled for the poor people, as sailing along that coast she saw with what terrible haste the Emperor's command had been obeyed. There, as far as the vision could pierce, ran, blazed, crackled one cordon of fire; miles in thickness, this fearful belt seemed as if it were to ward off the attack of worlds of savage beasts, instead of one mortal man. Yet such was the shocking policy of the Tartar despot, that to starve the great sea warrior from the coast, he laid waste hundreds of miles, ruined millions of his new subjects, and turned a fertile and populous land into a dreary wilderness.

For some days the little ship ploughed those waters, which, though famous for their tempests, were, as if in augury of better fortunes, now as placid as a lake, till at length they came in sight of the Pescadores, from almost every point of which they could see the colors of the victorious Koshinga. Then they reached the point of Formosa, upon which the Hollanders had erected their fort, but from which

now floated the flag of the sea chief; then Chow sent up a signal, and in reply the Dutch guns bellowed forth a salute. Shortly afterward some large barges put off from the shore to the ship, the princess and her party took their seats, and were speedily rowed to the shore, upon which she had no sooner put her foot, than Nicholas fell upon his knees before her, saying, "Welcome, illustrious daughter of the Mings, to the kingdom of Koshinga."

"Surely, my brave and noble brother, this is but mockery; for the daughter of the Mings is now but an outcast orphan," said the princess, taking Nicholas by the hands and assisting him to rise.

"Not so, O illustrious princess! for, like a brand from the flames, this great and fertile island hath been plucked from the thieving Tartars and Hollanders by Koshinga, that it may be restored to the princess of China, as a resting-place, till the whole of her empire be recovered."

"Who, O my brother, is this bold, brave man that thus shakes the world by his power?"

"A patriot, and a true Chinese, whose only ambition is to root out the miserable Tartars from the land, and restore its throne to its ancient Emperors," replied Nicholas; adding, "But the princess would see this terrible sea chief." Then he led her through the double rows of troops, which were drawn up the whole length between the castle and the shore, and all of whom bent low with respectful loyalty as the daughter of their late Emperor passed. When within the castle, he led her to a door where a num

ber of ladies in rich dresses stood ready to receive her. "Now, O illustrious princess, will thy servant prepare the noble chief for the great honor of thy visit," said Nicholas, leaving her to the care of the ladies.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE KING AND QUEEN OF FORMOSA.—HAPPY TERMINATION OF THE STORY.

THE pleasure of the princess had changed to grief; she felt disappointed and desolate, for once fallen from her high rank, and having been thrown by misfortune beneath the care of Nicholas, she had learned to regard him as a brother; therefore, after the death of the Prince Yong-Li, great had been her delight, by anticipation, of again meeting him—but now, alas! the brave youth seemed changed. Was he not, indeed, one of the officers of the great Koshinga, by whose command he had received her, not as a dear friend, but with the cold and formal respect due to that exalted rank, which, as it seemed about to rob her of her adopted brother, was hateful to her?

Thus, in a very melancholy mood, she followed the ladies through the corridor into a suite of rooms, magnificently furnished with the spoils from the well-laden ships of Li-Kong. She, who, more fortunate than most princesses, had had the painful mantle of royalty torn from her shoulders and been permitted for a season to taste the troubles of ordinary mortals, which, compared to her former state, seemed luxury itself, was again about to be petrified by state garments, and, like the idols, her Christian teaching

taught her to despise, placed upon a throne high up out of the way of common humanity, and as her experience had taught her, mocked with a false adoration.

The morning came, however, and still she as much feared to meet the chief as if he had been her greatest enemy. At last the terrible moment of meeting came, and she was conducted by her ladies to the great hall of the castle, which was hung with yellow cloth of gold. Not noticing the crowd of officers around, who were bowing to the ground, she bent her head downward, and as the ladies led her forward to the chair of state, she heard, "Welcome to the Queen of Tai-ouan." The welcome was echoed by a hundred voices; the princess looked up, the throne was vacant, but by her side, and holding her hand, stood the terrible Koshinga, at the sight of whom she trembled, but it was with joy, for the great sea chief after all was neither more nor less than Nicholas, the son of the merchant of the south, who, by his great abilities, valor, and energy, had conquered a kingdom and crowned himself.

Thus ends the troubles of the princess, Chow, Nicholas, and my story. I will, however, add, that although by some unaccountable neglect the historians of China have omitted to say one word about the queen, they all state that not only was Koshinga, the great son of Chin-Chi-Loong, crowned first King of Formosa, but in that capacity received ambassadors from several of the monarchs of Europe.

THE END.

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